ARCHANGEL STUDIOS
VOL. 2 #1
$2.95
CGE™
THE RED STAR™
GUEST • KAYL • SNAKEBITE • SCHRIER

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★ THE RED STAR

STORM OF SOULS

IT IS THE END OF AN ERA. THE UNITED REPUBLICS OF THE RED STAR, ONE OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, HAS FALLEN. ITS VAST TERRITORIES DIVIDED, ITS RICH LANDS RAPED BY CORRUPTION. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THIS CATASTROPHE, THE LOYAL CREW OF THE R.S.S. KONSTANTINOV HAS DISCOVERED THAT THE TRUTH BEHIND THEIR NATION'S SUDDEN COLLAPSE IS ALSO THE DARKEST SECRET OF ITS ONCE BELOVED LEADER.

THE SORCEROR IMBOHL REIGNED FOR DECADES AS DICTATOR OF THE UNITED REPUBLICS. THROUGHOUT THE YEARS OF HIS RULE, HIDDEN IN THE SPIRITREALM BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, HE BUILT A NETWORK OF FORTRESSES IN WHICH MILLIONS WERE MURDERED, THEIR SOULS IMPRISONED, GRANTING HIM THE POWER OF IMMORTALITY.

BUT IMBOHL BEGINS TO GROW WEAK. HARDENED AND STRENGTHENED BY THE HORROR OF THEIR SUFFERING, SPIRITS ONCE ENSLAVED HAVE BEGUN TO FIGHT BACK, ESCAPING THE DARK TOMBS OF THEIR CAPTIVITY. ONE OF THESE HAS BECOME SO POWERFUL THAT NONE OF IMBOHL'S SERVANTS DARE SPEAK HIS NAME.

IN LIFE HE WAS SOLDIER MARCUS ANTARES.

LIBERATED BY THE WISDOM OF ANOTHER ROGUE SPIRIT, THE SORCERESS KNOWN ONLY AS "THE RED WOMAN," ANTARES WANDERS THE SPIRITREALM, DOING BATTLE TO FREE HIS COMRADES FROM THEIR DAMNATION.

THE CREW OF THE R.S.S. KONSTANTINOV, PURSUED AND OUTNUMBERED, FIGHTS DESPERATELY TO ENTER THE SPIRITREALM AND JOIN MARCUS IN HIS STRUGGLE.

IN ORDER TO UNITE THEM, THE RED WOMAN MUST ATTEMPT TO GUIDE THE GREAT SHIP TOWARD ONE OF THE MOST TERRIBLE OF ALL THE PRISONS, A FORTRESS HIDDEN IN A STORM OF SOULS...

...THE FORTRESS OF THE ARCHANGEL

CHARACTERS

SRSS-MAJOR MAYA ANTARES

THE WIFE OF MARCUS ANTARES, A POWERFUL SORCERESS. FOR TEN YEARS SHE BELIEVED HER HUSBAND DEAD, AND WILL LET NOTHING STOP HER FROM FINDING HIM.

SKYMARSHALL URIK ANTARES

LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM, URIK ANTARES COMMANDS A SKYFURRACE. IN HIS MEMORY, URIK HAS LED A MUTINY, STEALING HIS SHIP TO SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS BROTHER, MARCUS.

GUARDSMAN KYUZO

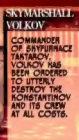
EACH RED SORCERESS IS PROTECTED BY A GUARDSMAN, OF THE THOUSANDS OF BODYGUARDS IN THE FLEET, NONE IS MORE DEADLY THAN KYUZO, DEFENDER OF MAYA ANTARES.

MAKITA

SHE WAS THE BEARER OF A MYSTERIOUS LETTER PROVING MARCUS WAS ALIVE. AGAINST HER WILL, MAYA AND KYUZO TOOK HER ABOARD THE KONSTANTINOV, AWAY FROM HER FORMER LIFE ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF NOVOSIBIRSK.

CHIEF ENGINEER TORIN

THE CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE KONSTANTINOV AND URIK'S TRUSTED FIRST MATE. TORIN HOLDS A POWERFUL SECRET THAT HAS KEPT HIM A FUGITIVE FROM THE LAW.



SKYMARSHALL VOLKOV

COMMANDER OF SKYFURRACE TANTAROV, VOLKOV HAS BEEN ORDERED TO UTTERLY DESTROY THE KONSTANTINOV AND ITS CREW AT ALL COSTS.

SRSS-COMMANDER NATALIA RAYVENNE

A PRODIGY AT THE FLEET ACADEMY, RAYVENNE IS THE TOP RANKING SORCERESS OF SKYFURRACE TANTAROV.

CHIEF ENGINEER SPEYS

A BRILLIANT ENGINEER, HIS CUSTOM RETRO-FITS HAVE MADE THE TANTAROV ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE AND POWERFUL SHIPS IN THE FLEET.

COMRADES OF THE KONSTANTINOV...
YOU CANNOT HEAR MY WORDS, BUT YOU WILL SENSE THEM AS YOUR OWN SPIRIT...
...YOUR OWN DRIVE TOWARD OUR NATION'S COMMON GOAL:
LIBERATION, ONCE AND FOR ALL FROM THE LEGACY OF IMBOHL.
MILLIONS UPON MILLIONS OF THE SPIRITS OF YOUR ANCESTORS ARE TRAPPED HERE--
...AWAITING A FREEDOM THAT ONLY YOUR TRIUMPH CAN BRING THEM.
YOU BEAR THE HOPE OF OUR ENTIRE PEOPLE. THOSE NOT YET BORN...
FOR THOUGH WE DWELL IN THE REALMS OF THE DAMNED...
...WE ARE ANGELS, CHAINED--
-- AND OUR POWER CAN INSPIRE YOU
TO LEAD US FROM DAMNATION
AND BRING SALVATION TO US ALL.
YOURS IS A TRYING BURDEN, MY COMRADES.
YOU ARE TRULY PATRIOTS, TRULY SOLDIERS OF YOUR MOTHERLAND.
FOR YOURS IS THE BATTLE THAT WILL DECIDE HER FATE.
...AND THOSE COUNTLESS FALLEN FOREFATHERS WHOSE LIVES WERE STOLEN FROM THEM BY THE INSANITY OF IMBOHL AND HIS ARMY OF MURDERERS.
IN MOMENTS OF AGONY
IN MOMENTS OF DOUBT
REMEMBER US.
IN MOMENTS OF WEAKNESS AND FEAR
REMEMBER US.
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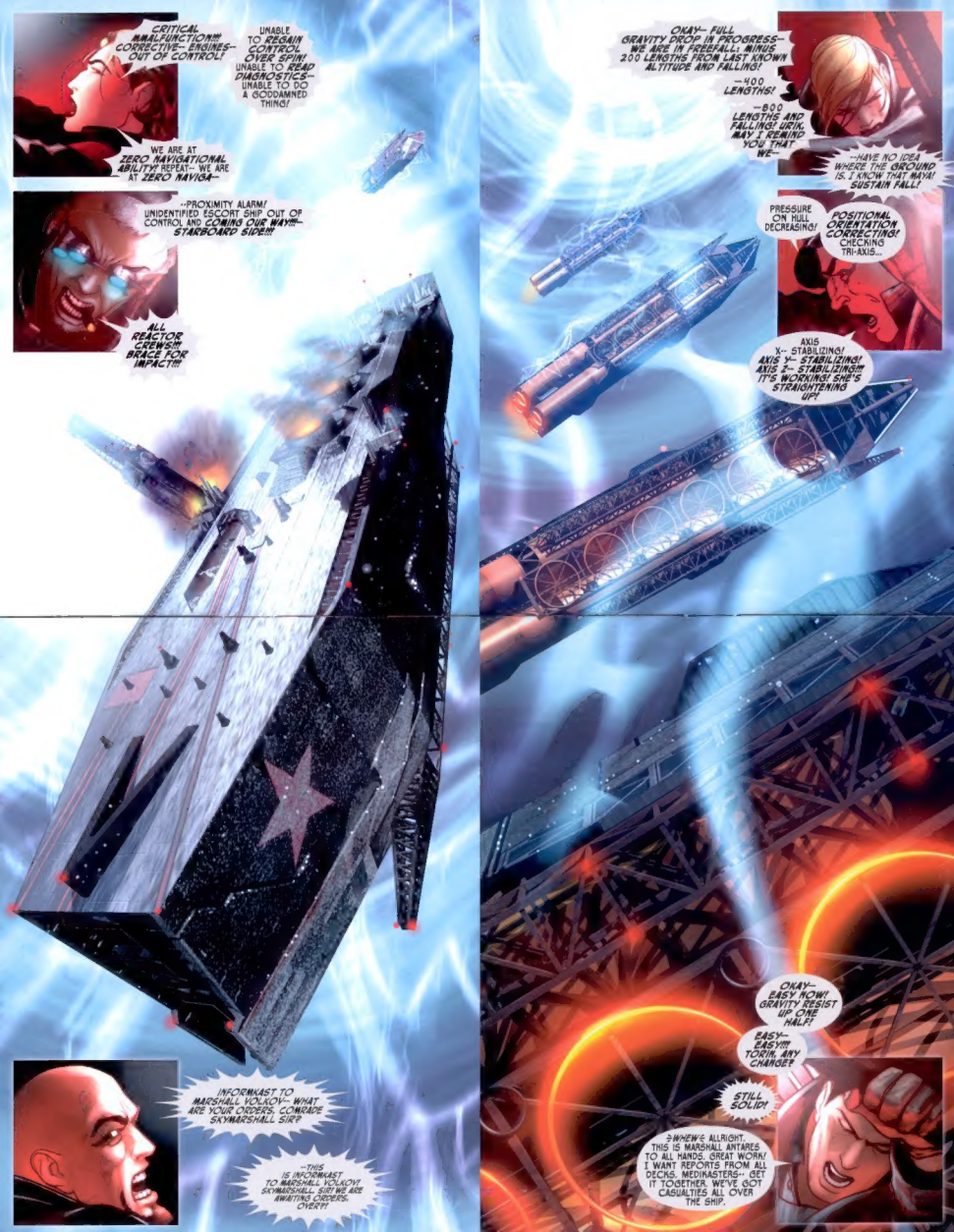
KONSTANTINOV
THIS IS INFORMANT TO MAJOR ANTARES! THE TRANSFER GATE IS IN TOTAL COLLAPSE!
REPEAT! TRANSFER GATE IN TOTAL COLLAPSE! NO LOCATION READINGS--
--I HAVE NO DATA ON PRESENT LOCATION! I HAVE NO DATA ON PRE--

THIS IS MARSHALL ANTARES TO ALL HANDS! TRANSFER GATE HAS COLLAPSED! ALL HANDS BRACE FOR CLASS ONE--
-- POSSIBLY CLASS TWO TUMBLE!
--WORSE THAN CLASS TWO! WE'RE GOING END OVER END--!!!
--ALL HANDS! IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS FOR CLASS FIVE TUMBLE!!!
THAT'S RRIGHT-- I SAIDD-- CLASS FIVE! PRREPARE FOR SHIFTSS IN GRAAVITY--!
WWATCH OUT-T FOR-- HEAVY DEBRIS!!! AMMUNITION DECKS! SECURE THE WARHEADS!
LLLOCK THE BLOCKS BEFORE WE DROPP THE ENGINES!
DOES ANYBODY KNOW-- WWHERE THE HELLL WE ARE?!
WE'RE IN SOME KIND OF-- RESISTANCE FIELD! WE HIT IT LIKE A STONE WALL!
I'M TRYING TO GET A READING BUT NOTHING'S MAKING ANY SENSE! ALL I KNOW--
-- IS WE ARE TUMBLING AND WE ARE TUMBLING BLIND!

MARSHALL VOLKOV THIS IS RAYVENNE-- I CANNOTT REPORT ALTITUDE S-SIR/ NOT ALLTITUDE-- NOT LOCATIONNN--
ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH OUR ESCORT SHIPS!-- NOW!!!
UNABLE TO CONTACT, SKYMARSHALL-- WE ARE NOT ONLY BLIND--
--BUT DEAF AND DUMB AS WELL!
...PERHAPS MY CHIEF ENGINEER HAS SOMETHING OTHER THAN PANIC TO OFFER THE SITUATION?!
-- BUT SKYMARSHALL, I--
--THAT WILL DO, WARKASTER RAYVENNE. THANK YOU. SPECKS?! REPORT!
THERE IZ ONLY ONE EXPLANATION-- BUT IT DOESN'T SEEMM PPOSSIBLE!
IT'S A STORM OF SOME KIND-- BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD--
--OF A STORM POWERFUL ENOUGH TO COLLAPSE A TRANSFER GATE!

THIS IS WHERE I ADMIT WITH PRIDE THAT I'VE NEVER ONCE ALLOWED MY SHIP TO FALL INTO A CLASS FIVE TUMBLE--!
--THE ONLY PROBLEM--
--IS THAT I SURE AS HELL DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET OUT OF ONE!
SO ANYONE GOT ANY IDEAS?!
I'VE TRIEDD-- EVERRY-THINGGG!--
--THE FORCES OF THE SSTTORRRM ARE--
--NOT NORMAL! PROCEDURES HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECTS!
YES?! AND?!!!
I SAY CUT ALL CORRECTIVE ENGINES. IN A STORM, LET THE SKY WIN!
ONE OF THE OLD SAILOR'S TRICKS, HUH?!
WHY THE HELL NOT!? WE'LL TAKE THE SAILS IN-- TORIN, SHUT DOWN CORRECTIVE ENGINES ON YOUR MARK!!!
IMMEDIATELY, SIR!
THIS IS TORIN TO ALL REACTOR CREWS!
PREPARE TO CUT ALL POWER TO CORRECTIVE ENGINES!
BRACE FOR FULL GRAVITY DROP--
--NOW!!!
--ARE YOU SURE IT WAS THIS 'RED WOMAN' YOU SAW IN NOKGORKA...?*
BECAUSE I THINK IT WAS THE GHOST OF MY EX-WIFE! I'M TELLING YOU SHE'S BEEN AFTER ME FOR YEARS!
YOUR SELF IMPORTANCE IS AMAZING, RAZIN, DO YOU KNOW THAT?
THANKS, CHIEF!
*VOL. I ISSUE #4 - BOSS

--SPECKS! WE'RE STILL TUMBLING!!! IF WE LOSE TRACK OF THE FUGITIVES I'M GOING TO HOLD YOU PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE!
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT-- SKYMARSHALL--YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME, BUT--
--THE FORCES AT WORK ON THE SHIP HAVE TO BE SOME KIND OF PROTOCOL!
--BUT KAST ON A SCALE BEYOND ALL KNOWN THEORY-- ALL KNOWN CALCULATION-- A SCALE THAT SIMPLY SHOULDN'T BE POSSIB--
--STOP THEORIZING, DAMN YOU!!! WHAT IS YOUR SOLUTION?!
SURRENDERING ALL CONTROL IN A STORM LIKE THIS?!
THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY?!
EVERYTHING I'VE TRIED HAS HAD THE OPPOSITE EFFECT! THEREFORE--
--CUTTING THE CORRECTIVE ENGINES SHOULD STABILIZE US!
--I SHOULD HAVE LEFT YOU TO ROT IN THE CAMPS!
I WILL TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT WE WILL DO! EMERGENCY PROCEDURES DICTATE MAXIMUM POWER TO ALL CORRECTIVE STABILIZATION ENGINES! NOW! DO YOU HEAR ME?!
BUT MARSHALL VOLKOV I'VE--
NOW!!!
AS YOU WISH, COMRADE SKYMARSHALL. ENGAGING S.E.P. 58:2 9!!!*
--NOW!!!
* FROM THE FLEET MANUAL OF STANDARD EMERGENCY PROCEDURES (S.E.P.) - GOSS


CRITICAL MALFUNCTION!!! CORRECTIVE-- ENGINES-- OUT OF CONTROL!
UNABLE TO REGAIN CONTROL OVER SPIN! UNABLE TO READ DIAGNOSTICS-- UNABLE TO DO A GODDAMNED THING!
WE ARE AT ZERO NAVIGATIONAL ABILITY! REPEAT-- WE ARE AT ZERO NAVIGA--
--PROXIMITY ALARM! UNIDENTIFIED ESCORT SHIP OUT OF CONTROL AND COMING OUR WAY!!!-- STARBOARD SIDE!!!
ALL REACTOR CREWS!!! BRACE FOR IMPACT!!!
OKAY-- FULL GRAVITY DROP IN PROGRESS-- WE ARE IN FREEFALL! MINUS 200 LENGTHS FROM LAST KNOWN ALTITUDE AND FALLING!
--400 LENGTHS!
--800 LENGTHS AND FALLING! URIK, MAY I REMIND YOU THAT WE--
--HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THE GROUND IS, I KNOW THAT MAY'AT SUSTAIN FALL!
PRESSURE ON HULL DECREASING!
POSITIONAL ORIENTATION CORRECTING! CHECKING TRI-AXIS...
AXIS X-- STABILIZING! AXIS Y-- STABILIZING! AXIS Z-- STABILIZING!!! IT'S WORKING! SHE'S STRAIGHTENING UP!
OKAY-- EASY NOW! GRAVITY RESIST UP ONE HALF!
EASY-- EASY!!! TORIN, ANY CHANGE?
STILL SOLID!
WHEW! ALLRIGHT. THIS IS MARSHALL ANTARES TO ALL HANDS. GREAT WORK! I WANT REPORTS FROM ALL DECKS. MEDIASTERS-- GET IT TOGETHER. WE'VE GOT CASUALTIES ALL OVER THE SHIP.
INFORMKAST TO MARSHALL VOLKOV-- WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS, COMRADE SKYMARSHALL SIR?
--THIS IS INFORMKAST TO MARSHALL VOLKOV! SKYMARSHALL SIR! WE ARE AWAITING ORDERS, OVER!!!

TWO HOURS SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF OUR TRANSFER GATE. CURRENT LOCATION UNKNOWN.
EMERGENCY DEADMAN'S FALL MANEUVER SAVED THE SHIP FROM CLASS FIVE TUMBLE. ONE MORE LIFE I OWE TORIN.
CASUALTIES HEAVY.
SERIOUS STRUCTURAL DAMAGE FROM FIREFIGHT WITH THE TAKTAROV AND HER ESCORTS UPON OUR ESCAPE FROM NOKGORKA.
...MOST SHIPS PURSUING US BELIEVED DESTROYED UPON GATE COLLAPSE. IF A SKYFURNACE COULD BE THROWN AROUND LIKE A TOY, GOD SAVE THE POOR BASTARDS IN THE FIGHTERCRAFT.
...ON-BOARD INFORMKAST SYSTEMS DAMAGED. SOURCE OF INTERFERENCE UNKNOWN. SOMETHING IN THIS STORM IS KEEPING US BLIND.
ON THE PLUS SIDE-- IF WE'RE BLIND, THEN THE TAKTAROV MUST BE TOO...
...IF THEY SURVIVED THE TUMBLE.
NO OUTSIDE CONTACT. NO NAVIGATION. NO ENEMY DETECT. NO...
...NO ARCHANGEL.
RIGHT.
ANY LUCK?
IS THAT A JOKE?
STILL, I DON'T THINK WE'RE LOST.
I THINK THIS WAS WHAT SHE TRIED TO DESCRIBE-- THE SORCERESS-- THE RED WOMAN...
SHE SPOKE...OF SOME KIND OF CHASM, OR BARRIER...*
...IMBOHL WOULD HAVE HAD TO DEFEND HIS PRISONS SOMEHOW.
EVEN FROM HIS OWN PEOPLE, VIRTUALLY--
--ESPECIALLY FROM HIS OWN PEOPLE.
ALL HIS POWER DEPENDED ON OUR NATION REMAINING IGNORANT OF HIS CRIMES.
THE PROBLEM, IF I'M RIGHT-- IF WE'VE ENTERED IMBOHL'S SPIRITREALM...
...IS THAT NOTHING BUT GHOSTS HAVE EVER ESCAPED.
*FROM VOL. 1 ISSUE #4-BOSS
THAT'S NOT A THEORY WE NEED TO REPEAT TO ANYONE FOR THE MOMENT, MAYA.
--KYUZO! HOW DO THE COMBAT DECKS LOOK?
A FEW FIGHTERCRAFT COLLISIONS, SO THERE ARE SOME TANGLED DECKS AMIDSHIP, BUT NOTHING SERIOUS.
AND HERE'S THE GORKA. BE CAREFUL, THOUGH. SHE'S A REAL SCRAPPER.

I NEVER GOT THE CHANCE TO THANK YOU, FOR DELIVERING MARCUS' LETTER.
MY BROTHER IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME. WE WERE CLOSE.
IF I'D KNOWN THAT THE LETTER WAS FOR REDS, I WOULD'VE BURNT IT.
SO SAVE THE SPEECH.
THEN WHY?-- WHY DELIVER IT?
PAPA, TRICKED ME.
MADE ME PROMISE AS HE LAY DYING. DIDN'T TELL ME THAT MAYA WAS A RED WITCH.
WELL, YOU'RE A HERO, THEN, AREN'T YOU? YOU'VE LED MOST OF THE SOUTHERN FLEET OUT OF NOKGORKA...
...SO LIGHTEN UP.
URIK, I'M GOING UP TOP...
...TO TOWER ONE.
HEYYY! I'M NOT BABYSITTING THE GORKA! TAKE OUR LITTLE MASCOT WITH YOU.
OH, I'M SORRY-- I COULD CALL YOU 'PRISONER'-- IF YOU LIKE THAT BETTER?
I'LL KILL YOU, YOU SONOFA%$#@!!!
!@#&!YOU! I'LL RIP YOUR &%$##&^%! OUT WITH MY TEETH BEFORE I'LL LET A @#!#$%$#@$$@# LIKE YOU CALL ME A #@$$%^#@!# PRISONER! YOU HEAR ME?!!!
I TOLD YOU!
...A REAL SCRAPPER.
OKAY, FEARLESS. LET'S GO.

THIRTEEN HOURS NOW, NO SIGN OF ANYTHING BUT MIST.
QUIET OUT HERE. THOUGH, ISN'T IT?
QUIET AS A GRAVEYARD...
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE-- SOMETHING UNNATURAL ABOUT IT. THE AIR FEELS-- CHARGED, SOMEHOW.
LIKE A PROTOCOL CHAMBER.
BUT THAT'S INSANE. SPIRITREALM OR NOT, TO CAST AT THIS MAGNITUDE-
--IF IMBOHL'S SORCERY IS THIS POWERFUL...
WAIT. LISTEN.
KYLZO-- WAKE MAKITA.
LRIK-! TELL ME YOU'RE PICKING THIS UP...!

NOTHING!
NOTHING AT ALL?
NO DAMN'T WHY?!
I'VE GOT VISUAL ON TWO OVERSTRIKERS--
--THEY'RE RIGHT ON TOP OF US_
--EVERYBODY QUIET!
LIEUTENANT, INFORM FORWARD ARSENALS PREPARE TO FIRE
YES, COMRADE SKYMARSHALL, SIR. ALSO, SIR-- REQUEST PERMISSION TO TAKE OFF THIS EMERGENCY HARNESS? IT'S A STRAIGHT JACKET, SIR.
SUCK IT UP, LIEUTENANT. IF WE GET THROWN INTO ANOTHER TUMBLE, YOU AND EVERYBODY ELSE CAN THANK ME THEN
MAYA, DO YOU SEE
NO, URI. NO SIGN OF THE TAKTAROV
IF THEY'RE THAT CLOSE, THEY MUST SEE US-- WHY AREN'T THEY ATTACKING?
YOU'D KNOW IF YOU WERE UP HERE. THIS STORM IS SO DAMN THICK, YOU CAN BARELY SEE ANY SHIP MARKINGS. THEY PROBABLY THINK WE'RE THE TAKTAROV!
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY FIGURE THAT ONE OUT.
WAIT-- URI-- THEY'RE CHANGING COURSE

STAY CALM MAINTAIN SPEED AND HEADING WE'RE NOT BLOWING OUR COVER IF WE DON'T HAVE TO
THEY'RE AT POINT BLANK RANGE, JR...
FORWARD ARSENAL, READY A BARRAGE
DO NOT-- I REPEAT DO NOT FIRE UNTIL I GIVE THE ORDER.
IT'S ALRIGHT! THEY'RE NOT TAKING ATTACK POSTURE!
--THEY'RE MOVING INTO ESCORT POSITION! EITHER THEY ACTUALLY BELIEVE WE'RE THE TAKTAROV...
...OR THEY'RE BLUFFING, AND JUST LAYING LOW
NOT A BAD MOVE. THEY DON'T WANT TO TAKE US ON ALONE...
STUPID TO SHOW US THEIR BACKSIDES--
-I SAY THEY'RE DEAD MEN
KILL THEM NOW, WHILE WE'VE GOT THE CHANCE
THAT'S THE VICIOUS LITTLE SISTER I REMEMBER--
--MAJOR, YOU MAY FIRE WHEN READY

THANK YOU, SKYMARSHALL. SIR.
FORWARD BATTERY, CHECK YOUR TARGETING! WE'VE GOT SOME DENSE STORMCLOUDS AHEAD!
WAIT— HOLD.. THAT. FIRE ORDER--
SOME.. KIND OF LIGHT
NO
MAYA--? WHAT
NO..
HARD TO PORT!!!
--NOW!!!

KASTAN DEFENSIVE SHELL!
RANGE--FIRST INCREMENT! POWER--OVERMAXIMUM! REDLINE 25 PERCENT OVER KASTER CAPACITY!!
MAKITA! STAY CLOSE! I DON'T KNOW IF THE SHELL CAN HOLD!
HOLD ON!

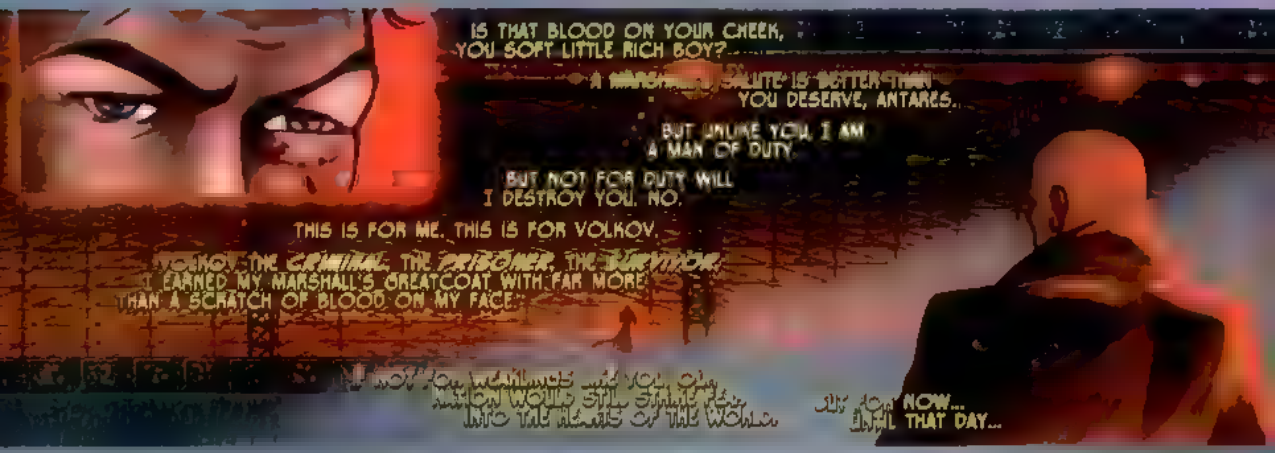
IS SHE HARD TO PORT!?
AYE, SIR! HARD OVER!!!
BRACE FOR COLLISION!!
...THIS IS HOW YOU DID IT, ISN'T IT?
...THIS IS HOW YOU FIRST CONQUERED OUR PEOPLE ALL THOSE DECADES AGO.
...YOU KEPT US IN THE DARK.
...KEPT US BLIND.
...UNTIL WE DESTROYED EACH OTHER.
...NOW REALIZING THAT WE WERE PLAYED TO YOUR FAVOR UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT.
...TIL IT WAS TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING BUT DIE.

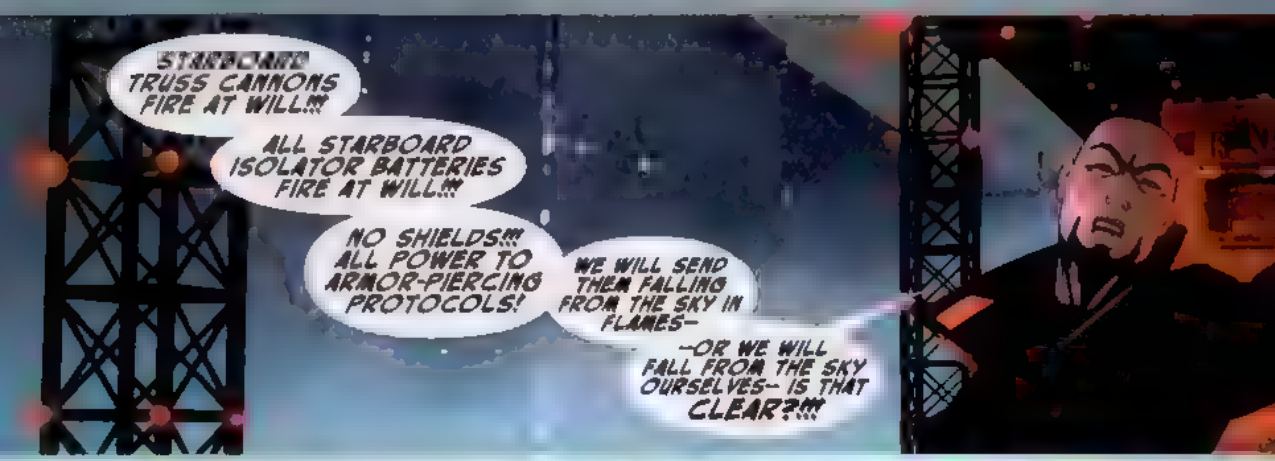
...HOW MANY MILLIONS OF US DID YOU SLAUGHTER TO HOLD POWER?
I CAN HEAR EVERY ONE OF THEM IN THE SCREAMS AND PAIN OF MY CREW.
I WON'T FAIL THEM, WIDOW...
WHATEVER IT TAKES... HOWEVER LONG.
YOU'LL KICK AND YOU'LL SCREAM AND I SWEAR YOU'LL BEG FOR MERCY AT THE END.
I AM SENDING YOU BACK TO HELL...
...IF I HAVE TO DRAG YOU THERE MYSELF.

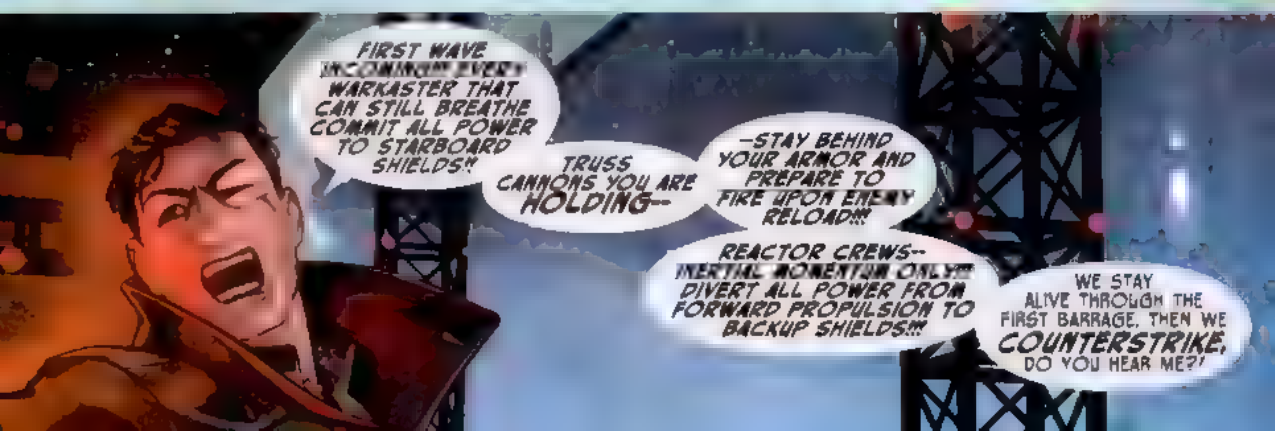
TORIN! HOW BAD S T?
THE STARBOARD TERMINUS OF THE VENTRAL ARRAY IS GONE. WE'VE GOT A TWO-HUNDRED METER GASH WHERE IT USED TO BE.
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO REPAIR IT ANYTIME SOON-- WE MAY HAVE TO DROP THE ARRAY!
NO! HOLD ON TO IT FOR NOW!-- AND GET ALL STARBOARD SHIELDS UP FULL!
MAYA-- YOU ALIVE?!
I'M HERE. I SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT SOONER, URIK-- I--
--ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? YOU SAVED THE SHIP! NOW GET DOWN HERE. I--
--NO, URIK. I'M STAYING UP HERE. WE'RE FINE- MY DEFENSIVE IS HOLDING. SOMEONE'S GOT TO STAY ON POINT.
--NO, SPECKS! DO NOT DROP THE ARRAY UNTIL WE HAVE NO CHOICE!
I'M LEAVING THE BRIDGE. THERE IS A FORMALITY I MUST ATTEND TO. FOR NOW, PREPARE ALL STARBOARD GUNS.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SKYMARSHALL-- AT THIS RANGE WE'LL DO AS MUCH DAMAGE TO OURSELVES AS TO THE KONSTANTIN--
--THE SUCCESS OF OUR MISSION IS NOT PREDICATED UPON OUR SURVIVAL! NOW-- PROCEED AS ORDERED!
--TORIN, WHY AREN'T THOSE SHIELDS UP?!
UNKNOWN MALFUNCTION. AS SOON AS I LOCATE IT I--
--WE CAN'T LET VOLKOV CAPITALIZE ON THIS, TORIN! GET THOSE SHIELDS UP-- NOW!!!

...BUT I'M SEE PAST OWN O...
VERY WELL, THEN, VOLKOV.
A DUEL.
SKYFURNACES AT BROADSIDES.
WE MAY BE THE FIRST TO PERFORM THE MARSHAL'S SALUTE SINCE THE FALL OF THE REPUBLICS...
...QUITE AN HONOR.
SHAME OUR SHIPS CAN'T COMLINK IN THIS STORM. THE INSULTS WERE ALWAYS MY FAVORITE PART.
C'MON, OLD BOY. I'M WAITING. NOT LIKE YOU TO BE LATE FOR PROCEDURE...

THERE YOU ARE.
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU LIVED THROUGH, VOLKOV. WHAT THE WORLD DID TO YOU.
YOU WANT TO FIGHT THE KONSTANTINOV IN A BATTLE OF ANNIHILATION...
...THEN LET US SHOW YOU WHAT OUR FATHERS HAVE TAUGHT US OF ANNIHILATION.


IS THAT BLOOD ON YOUR CHEEK, YOU SOFT LITTLE RICH BOY?...
A MARSHALL'S LIFE IS BETTER THAN YOU DESERVE, ANTARES.
BUT UNLIKE YOU, I AM A MAN OF DUTY.
BUT NOT FOR DUTY WILL I DESTROY YOU. NO.
THIS IS FOR ME. THIS IS FOR VOLKOV.
VOLKOV. THE CRIMINAL. THE PRISONER. THE SURVIVOR.
I EARNED MY MARSHALL'S GREATCOAT WITH FAR MORE THAN A SCRATCH OF BLOOD ON MY FACE.
NOW... UNTIL THAT DAY...


STARBOARD TRUSS CANNONS FIRE AT WILL!!!
ALL STARBOARD ISOLATOR BATTERIES FIRE AT WILL!!!
NO SHIELDS!!! ALL POWER TO ARMOR-PIERCING PROTOCOLS!
WE WILL SEND THEM FALLING FROM THE SKY IN FLAMES--
--OR WE WILL FALL FROM THE SKY OURSELVES-- IS THAT CLEAR?!!!


FIRST WAVE INCOMING!!! EVERY WARRASTER THAT CAN STILL BREATHE COMMIT ALL POWER TO STARBOARD SHIELDS!!
TRUSS CANNONS YOU ARE HOLDING--
--STAY BEHIND YOUR ARMOR AND PREPARE TO FIRE UPON ENEMY RELOAD!!!
REACTOR CREWS-- INERTIAL MOMENTUM ONLY!!! DIVERT ALL POWER FROM FORWARD PROPULSION TO BACKUP SHIELDS!!!
WE STAY ALIVE THROUGH THE FIRST BARRAGE, THEN WE COUNTERSTRIKE. DO YOU HEAR ME?!

WE HOLD THE LINE, KONSTANTINOV!!!
OR WE DIE!!!

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VOL. 2 #2
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★THE RED STAR

BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER

VOL.2 ISSUE 3

STORM OF SOULS

Guided by the powerful Iron Red Comet, Ork and Maya have arrived at the edge of the spiritrealm. Aboard the R.S.S. Tektron, Volkov orders the destruction of the Constantinov and its crew by any means necessary. Lost in the impenetrable darkness of the spiritrealm, their navigational systems useless, the two great ships have narrowly avoided direct collision, and having found each other, are now locked in a battle that will decide their fate.

AS WE RETURN

The Konstantinov has not entered the spiritrealm alone. Pursuing it is Marshall Volkov in his skytruncer, the R.S.S. Tektron. Volkov's orders: to destroy the Konstantinov and its crew by any means necessary. Lost in the impenetrable darkness of the spiritrealm, their navigational systems useless, the two great ships have narrowly avoided direct collision, and having found each other, are now locked in a battle that will decide their fate.

CHARACTERS

SISS-MAJOR MAYA ANTARES

THE WIFE OF MARCUS ANTARES A POWERFUL SORCERESS FOR TEN YEARS SHE BELIEVED HER HUSBAND DEAD AND WILL LET NOTHING STOP HER FROM FINDING HIM.

SKYMARSHALL UNIK ANTARES

LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM UNIK ANTARES COMMANDS A SKYFURNACE. IN HIS MEMORY UNIK HAS LED A MUTINY, STEALING HIS SHIP TO SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS BROTHER, MARCUS.

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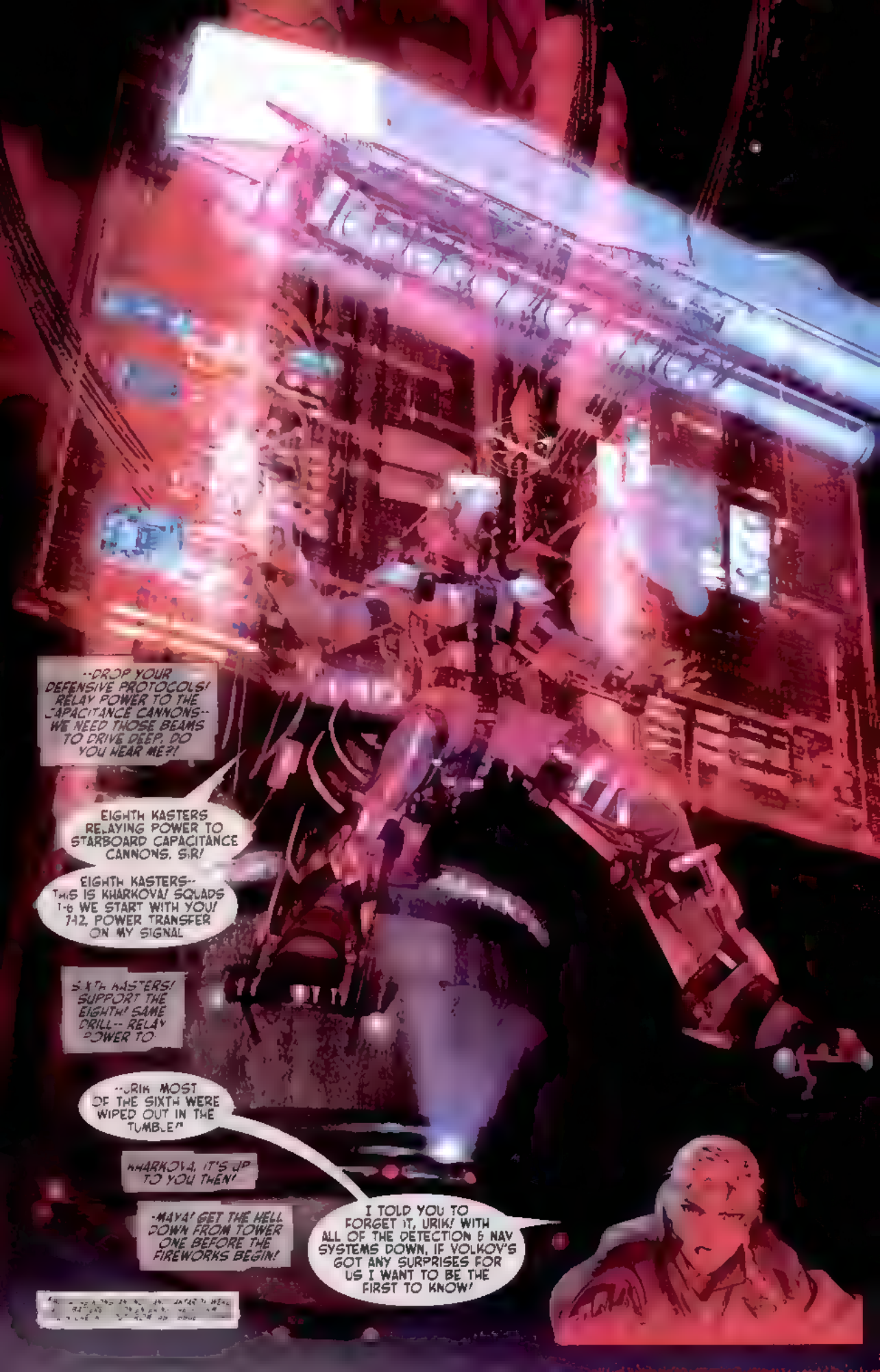
CHIEF ENGINEER SPECS

A BRILLIANT ENGINEER, HIS CUSTOM RETROFITS HAVE MADE THE TANTAROV ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE AND POWERFUL SHIPS IN THE FLEET.

THIS IS ANTARES TO ALL STARBOARD TRUSS BATTERIES! PREP YOUR RAILS FOR MAXIMUM OVERHEAT! ON MY MARK YOU WILL BEGIN FIRING AND WILL NOT STOP UNTIL WE ARE CLEAR OF THE TAKTAROV!
MAX OVERHEAT?! LOOK AT IT! IT'S ABOUT TO EXPLODE RIGHT NOW!
YOU HEARD HIM, SOLDIER! THE BOSS WANTS HEAT WE'LL GIVE HIM HEAT! NOW MOVE!!!
WE ARE AT POINT BLANK RANGE! HEAVY ARMOR PIERCING CLUSTER SALVOS FROM PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DECKS!
--THIRD DECKS YOU ARE ON CAPACITANCE BEAMS! I WANT BURNING GASHES FOR THE SHELL CLUSTERS TO PENETRATE!
--CAPTAIN KHARKOVA --ANTARES HERE
KHARKOVA HERE SKYMARSHALL


--DROP YOUR DEFENSIVE PROTOCOLS! RELAY POWER TO THE CAPACITANCE CANNONS-- WE NEED THOSE BEAMS TO DRIVE DEEP. DO YOU HEAR ME?!
EIGHTH KASTERS RELAYING POWER TO STARBOARD CAPACITANCE CANNONS, SIR!
EIGHTH KASTERS-- THIS IS KHARKOVA! SQUADS 1-6 WE START WITH YOU! 1.42, POWER TRANSFER ON MY SIGNAL
SIXTH KASTERS! SUPPORT THE EIGHTH! SAME DRILL-- RELAY POWER TO
--URIK MOST OF THE SIXTH WERE WIPED OUT IN THE TUMBLE"
KHARKOVA, IT'S UP TO YOU THEN!
-MAYA! GET THE HELL DOWN FROM TOWER ONE BEFORE THE FIREWORKS BEGIN!
I TOLD YOU TO FORGET IT, URIK! WITH ALL OF THE DETECTION & NAV SYSTEMS DOWN, IF VOLKOV'S GOT ANY SURPRISES FOR US I WANT TO BE THE FIRST TO KNOW!

R.S.S. TAKTAROV
..THE KONSTANT NOI IS THE MOST HEAVILY ARMORED SKYFURNACE IN THE FLEET! WHY WASTE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO
-MIND YOUR CONDUCT, NATA.. A THE F REPOWER OF THE TAKTAROV S MORE THAN CAPABLE
IN FACT, THE FIREPOWER OF THE KONSTANTINOV: CRIPPLED OR NOT, IS ALSO MORE THAN CAPABLE TO CURSE US WITH GRAVITY.. SIR
LISTEN TO SPECS, SIR. PLEASE THIS IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO LOCK ON AND BOARD THEM!
THEY HAVE SUSTAINED MASSIVE CASUALTIES S NCE THEIR ESCAPE FROM NONGORMA, NOT TO MENTION THE TUMBLE WHEN WE ARRIVED HERE-
--WHEREVER THE HELL 'HERE' IS!
IN A CLOSE ASSAULT WE WOULD OUTNUMBER THEM FIVE TO ONE! WHY DESTROY ANTARES WHEN YOU CAN BRING HIM BACK TO CENTRAL COMMAND IN SHAME!?
..SIR?
RAYVENNE, SEND ALL PORTSIDE ISOLATOR CREWS TO STARBOARD
THEY ARE TO STAND BY AND REPLACE CASUALTIES AS NEEDED MAINTAIN FIRE SUPERIORITY AT ALL TIMES
SPECS, STATUS REPORT ON THE VENTRAL ARRAY
IT'S NOT GOOD I'LL SEND CREW OUT THERE AS SOON AS THERE IS BREAK IN THE FIGHTING
--NO THE ARRAY S FAR MORE CRUCIAL THAN THE LIVES OF A FEW PRISONERS
SIR, ONCE THE SHOOTING STARTS THEY WON'T SURVIVE FOR MORE THAN--
--SEND THEM, IMMEDIATELY EXPERIENCE UNDER F RE IS GOOD FOR THEM
SIR, YES SIR. SPECS OUT
THESE TRAITORS ARE NO LONGER OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS RAYVENNE WHEN THEY BETRAYED THEIR DUTIES, THEY BETRAYED OUR STATE. THERE IS ONLY ONE PUNISHMENT GOOD ENOUGH FOR THEM.
THE R FINAL DUTY TO THEIR NATION IS TO DIE FOR T
OURS IS TO HOLD THEM TO THIS.

R.S.S. KONSTANTINOV
MAXIMUM TARGET EXPOSURE IN FIFTEEN SECONDS. REPEAT, KONSTANTINOV IS FIFTEEN SECONDS FROM MAXIMUM TARGET EXPOSURE
TEN SECONDS.. REPEAT. TAKTAROV IS TEN SECONDS FROM MAXIMUM TARGETING EXPOSURE.
TARGET AT MAXIMUM EXPOSURE IN FIVE...
ALL KASTERS MARK YOUR V TAL SIGNS!
OFFENSE, DO NOT-- I REPEAT DO NOT OVERKAST UNLESS YOU'VE GOT ONE HELLUVA SHOT!
DEFENSIVE KASTERS: STAY SHARP! OFF CERS KEEP AN EYE ON THE CAPACITY CYCLES. THERE ARE TOO FEW OF JS TO HAVE ANYONE BURN OUT!
ON MY MARK
"DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MOR"

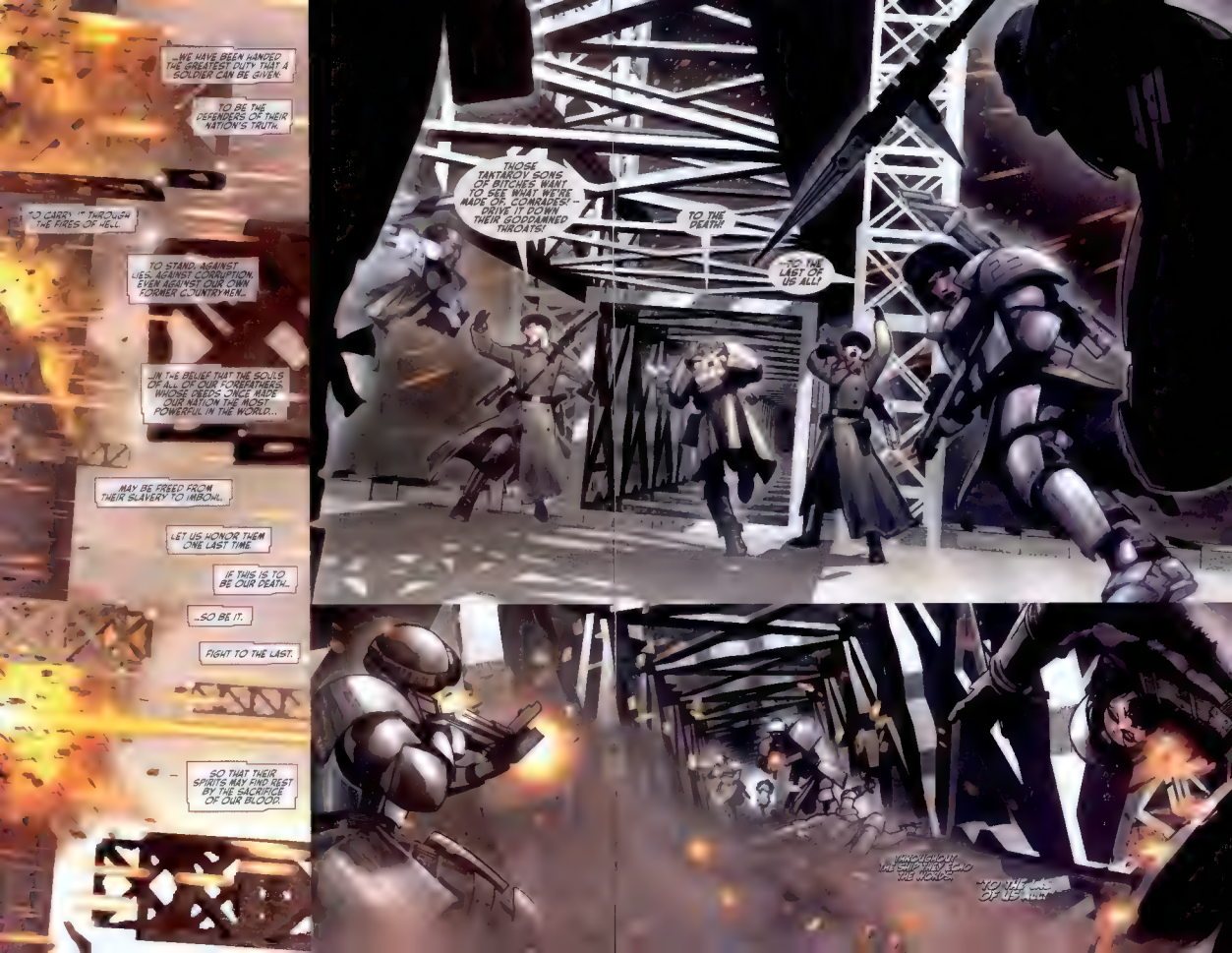
THUNDER
THE REPORTS COME IN TOO FAST.
VOICES SCREAMING ONE MOMENT
SILENCED THE NEXT
WITH EVERY MOAN
WITH EVERY CRY
THE SENSATION THAT WE'VE BEGUN TO FALL
WE DIE BY THE TENS.
BY THE HUNDREDS.

I KEEP YELLING
OCCASIONALLY, I HEAR A ROAR OF CELEBRATION.
THEN THUNDER. AGAIN.
AND AGAIN.
THUNDER COMING FROM EVERYWHERE.
FOR AN ETERNITY.
ALMOST. THROUGH.
THE FIRING SWITCH ON MY BOX A MOMENT CHANGE FOR RELOAD.
JUST ENOUGH TO DRIVE YOU INSANE.
THE STORM.

LAST BARRAGE OF THE GAUNTLET.
THE BEAMS DRIVE DEEP.
HOW THE HELL DOES SHE TAKE IT?
BUT SHE DOES.
SILENCE.
I'M HERE. YOU ALLRIGHT?

ST... ALIVE
HOW'S MY LITTLE MASCOT DOING UP THERE?
...YOU'RE MORE AND MORE POPULAR WITH HER
I DON'T SUPPOSE WE SHOT THEM DOWN?
SO WHAT SIDE ARE THEY COMING AROUND ON?
STARBOARD. HE'S RAISING HIS SIEGE LOCKS.
THAT'S WHAT I WOULD DO
SO IT'S ALL OR NOTHING
WE'RE TOO BANGED UP TO OUTRUN HIM, SO.
YEAH. ALL OR NOTHING
SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE, MAYA
ALL HANDS, THIS IS MARSHALL ANTARES.
PREPARE TO BE BOARDED.

TIME TO ENEMY CONTACT: TWO MINUTES! REPEAT: TWO MINUTES TO CONTACT!
ALL HEARTY TO STARBOARD COMBAT DECKS ON THE DOUBLE! MEN ON THE DOUBLE.
FOR ME, LONG AFTER I'M GONE FROM HERE...
I'VE WANTED TO LEAD MY COMRADES IN INTO DEEP, HATE FILLED...
DEPLOY B-ZONE COMBAT DECKS! A-ZONE DECKS ARE ON FIRE FROM THE BARRAGE!
HOOK TROOPERS! CONFIGURE ARMS FOR MAN TO MAN COMBAT! MAILERS! SET PACKS FOR IMMOLATION!
TO DEFEND OUR NATION FROM THOSE WHO WISHED TO DESTROY HER...
FIRING FORWARD BATTERIES
I BELIEVED AND MARCHED AND SALUTED UNTIL I WAS GIVEN COMMAND OF ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL SKYSHIPS IN THE WORLD.
...ONLY TO FIND THAT THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE IDEALS OF MY COUNTRY--
--TO THE DREAMS OF MY PEOPLE--
--WERE THE LIARS WHO RULED US.
ONE MINUTE ONE MINUTE TO ENEMY CONTACT! RAISING SIEGE LOCKS!!
...FOR THIS REALIZATION, MY CREW AND I HAVE BEEN BRANDED AS CRIMINALS.
...AND SENTENCED TO DEATH.
INFORMANT, I'LL ADDRESS THE CREW NOW.
IMMEDIATELY, SIR. PRIORITY ONE COMLINE IS YOURS, SKYMARSHALL.
ALL HANDS -- BROTHERS AND SISTERS
COMRADES OF THE KONSTANTINOV...


...WE HAVE BEEN HANDED THE GREATEST DUTY THAT A SOLDIER CAN BE GIVEN.
TO BE THE DEFENDERS OF THEIR NATION'S TRUTH.
TO CARRY "IT" THROUGH THE FIRES OF HELL.
TO STAND, AGAINST LESS, AGAINST CORRUPTION, EVEN AGAINST OUR OWN FORMER COUNTRYMEN...
...IN THE BELIEF THAT THE SOULS OF ALL OUR FOREFATHERS, WHOSE DEEDS ONCE MADE OUR NATION THE MOST POWERFUL IN THE WORLD...
MAY BE FREED FROM THEIR SLAVERY TO IMBOWI...
LET US HONOR THEM ONE LAST TIME.
IF THIS IS TO BE OUR DEATH...
...SO BE IT.
FIGHT TO THE LAST.
SO THAT THEIR SPIRITS MAY FIND REST BY THE SACRIFICE OF OUR BLOOD.
THOSE TAKTAKOY SONS OF BITCHES WANT TO SEE WHAT WE'RE MADE OF. COMRADES! -- DRIVE IT DOWN THEIR GODDAMNED THROATS!
TO THE DEATH!
-- TO THE LAST OF US ALL!
THROUGHOUT THE SHIP WHICH HEAD THE WORD...
"TO THE LAST OF US ALL!"

THEY FIGHT AS THE HEROES OF OUR ENTIRE HISTORY ARE AMONG THEM.
AS IF THESE ARE NOT THE IRON DECKS OF OUR GREAT SHIP, BUT THE SACRED SOIL OF OUR MOTHERLAND ITSELF.
THEIR VOICES RINGING OUT OVER THE ENDLESS HAIL OF AUTOFIRE.
"TO THE LAST! TO THE LAST OF US ALL!"
THERE IS NO BRUTALITY LIKE THAT SHARED BETWEEN FORMER COUNTRYMEN.
NO RIVALRY SO BITTER AS WHEN BROTHER STANDS AGAINST BROTHER.

NO BITTERNESS AS HATEFUL AS YOURS, VOLKOV.
SHOCKWAVE. MASSIVE.
IN THE AQUEDUCTS ABOVE THE ENGINES.
TOO FAR IN FOR ANY OF YOUR MEN TO HAVE PENETRATED THIS FAST.
SAVE ONE.
WHY THE HELL DIDN'T I THINK OF IT UNTIL NOW...
TORIN, GET THE HELL AWAY FROM THE REAR QUADRANT. IMMEDIATELY!
DAMN THAT BASTARD TO HELL-- HE PLAYED A ZERO, DIDN'T HE?
IT'S VOLKOV. OF COURSE HE DID.
...JUST GET THE HELL AWAY FROM THERE! NOW! THAT'S AN ORDER!
MAYA-- DID YOU--
YEAH, I HEARD. SHUTTING OFF LOCATION MARKER.
WATCH YOURSELF, URI.
I WILL.

RAYVENNE JERE S.R
REPORT OF HEAVY DETONATION AT ENEMY TORPEDOS
INFILTRATION OF OPERATIVE SUCCESSFUL.
REGULAR UPDATES, AS ORDERED.
WITH NO SIGNAL CONTACT BETWEEN US AND THE OPERATIVE, I CAN'T GUARANTEE-
--THE ZERO WILL KNOW HOW TO MAKE HIS PRESENCE VISIBLE.
--OH, AND RAYVENNE...
SIR?
NEVER OPEN WITH A BOARDING MANEUVER. A BROADSIDE IS DESIGNED TO SOFTEN A TARGET SO THAT THE ATTACKER CAN, AT HIS CHOOSING, CONTINUE WITH ANOTHER PASS OR BOARD THROUGH THE ENEMIES WEAKENED DEFENSES.
IF YOU HAVE AMBITIONS TO WEAR A GREATCOAT YOU WILL NEED LEARN TO TRUST SUCH TACTICS.
OBSERVE CLOSELY, NOW. SEE HOW INEVITABLY OUR VICTORY UNFOLDS...

IT MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE
FOR YOU, A SLAVE OF IMBOHL'S
TREACHERY, TO UNDERSTAND

FOR THE LAST TIME--
TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW OF THE BONDS AT ARCHANGEL..
. OR BE SENT, BROKEN, BACK TO YOUR MASTER.
...BUT IN LIFE, YOU WERE A SOLDIER OF OUR COUNTRY
AS I WAS
TO BETRAY MBOHL --
IS A FATE WORSE -- THAN OUR DAMNATION HERE AND NONE HAVE BETRAYED HIM AS YOU HAVE
WE FEAR YOU, WANDERER BUT WHEN WE IMAGINE HOW HE WILL PUNISH YOU..
TO YOUR MASTER, THEN
SLAVE
AFTER TEN YEARS I DO NOT FEEL SO NEWL
I HAVE NEVER BEEN ENSLAVED HERE
THANKS TO YOU

NEVER KNOWN WHAT IT IS TO BE BOUND TO THOSE CAGES OF THERS, HARVESTING SPIRITS TO FEED IMBOWL.
YET--
--IT IS THEIR WEAKNESS, THEIR OBEDIENCE THAT KEEPS OUR PEOPLE BOUND TO IMBOWL.
I HAVE NO PITY FOR THEM

ARCHANGEL STUDIOS

VOL. 2 #3
$2.99

THE REDSTAR

U.S.S. SNAKEBITE: SCARLET

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★THE RED STAR
THE EYES OF IMBOHL

THE PATH TO ARCHANGEL IS MARKED BY THE RUINS OF DEFEATED PRISONS.

PRISONS LIBERATED BY THE RED WOMAN.

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF THE GHOSTS OF MY COUNTRYMEN...

...ONCE BOUND TO THIS PLACE.

UNTIL SHE ARRIVED, IN FORCE, TO LIBERATE THEM.

THE STORY SO FAR

The Konstantinov and Taktarov, having crossed over into the Spiritrealm, are lost in the Storm of Souls; the two mighty vessels locked together in a fight to the death.

AS WE RETURN

Elsewhere in the Spiritrealm, Marcus Antares and The Red Woman, battling Imbohl's guardsmen at every step, are desperately seeking information on the secret defenses of the Fortress Archangel, and most importantly, a way to break the Bonds that hold the souls of their ancestors within.

CHARACTERS

SRSS-MAJOR MAYA ANTARES

THE WIFE OF MARCUS ANTARES, A POWERFUL SORCERESS. FOR TEN YEARS SHE BELIEVED HER HUSBAND DEAD, AND WILL LET NOTHING STOP HER FROM FINDING HIM.

SKYMARSHALL URIK ANTARES

LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM, URIK ANTARES COMMANDS A SKYFURNACE. IN HIS MEMORY, URIK HAS LED A MUTINY, STEALING HIS SHIP TO SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS BROTHER, MARCUS.

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SOME OF THEM, FRIGHTENED OF IMBOHL'S RETRIBUTION, TOOK REFUGE IN THE STORM OF SOULS.
SOME JOINED THE RED WOMAN'S ARMY, CARRYING ON THE STRUGGLE THAT FREED THEM.
STILL OTHERS FLED TO OTHER PRISONS, PREFERRING THE SECURITY OF SLAVERY OVER THE DESPERATE BURDEN OF FREEDOM.
FOR THEM, THE DECADES OF IMBOHL'S REIGN OVER THE LANDS OF THE RED STAR HAVE NEVER LOST THEIR GRANDEUR.
EVEN UPON THE DISCOVERY OF THIS CURSED AFTERLIFE THEY REFUSE TO ACCEPT HIS TREACHERY.
THEY GAVE THEIR SOULS TO BE KAST IN IRON, JOINING THE RANKS OF IMBOHL'S GUARD.

TO DEFEND MARCUS' 'DREAM' FOR OUR NATION...!
NOT A DREAM... ONLY A LIE.
WHILE HE SPOKE OF HIS VISIONS OF UTOPIA... OF A PARADISE FOR THE COMMON MAN...
...HE CONSTRUCTED THESE PRISONS WITH THE BLOOD OF OUR INNOCENCE.
AND STILL, SOMEHOW, AFTER ALL THIS...
...THEY WANT TO BELIEVE.

TO SERVE HIM IN BLIND OBEDIENCE FOR ETERNITY...

...STRIKE DOWN THOSE WHO OPPOSE HIM.

THEIR ANGER DOES NOT FOOL ME. I KNOW ITS SOURCE. SOMEWHERE WITHIN THEM, EVEN AFTER BEING BOUND IN IRON, THEY *KNOW.*

THEY *KNOW* THAT IMBOHL MURDERED THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN...

BY THE *MILLIONS.*

BY THE *TENS* OF MILLIONS.

THEIR FATE TO TOIL IN THIS PRISON OF SOULS.

UNLESS I CAN FREE THEM.

PATHETIC, MARCUS.
YOUR PARRIES LACK COUNTERFORCE!
YOU'RE STRIKING IMPATIENTLY--
--ANGLES OF ATTACK TOO PREDICTABLE.
I'VE TRAINED YOU FAR BETTER THAN THIS, ANTARES.

IF YOU FIGHT LIKE THIS WHEN WE REACH THE GATES...
...IT WILL ALL HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING!
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT WHAT WE'RE GOING TO FIND WHEN WE BREACH THE FORTRESS.
...THERE ARE OVER A HUNDRED THOUSAND OF IMBOHL'S GUARD DEFENDING ARCHANGEL.
...IF WE DON'T GET PAST THEM, THEN WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE GODDAMNED BONDS.
FOR TEN DECADES I'VE SOUGHT THE SECRETS OF ARCHANGEL FORTRESS.
ALL I EVER LEARNED IS THIS.
IF ANYONE IS EVEN GOING TO *BESIEGE* THEM, I ALONE *BREAK* THEM.
SIMPLE FEAT TO HAVE ACHIEVED THEM, MARCUS. YOU ARE THE FIRST AFTER IMBOHL TO *EMBRACE* POWER.
AND IF I BEGIN TO *ABUSE* IT?
...MY SWORD, YOU SOUL WILL KNOW OBLIVION.
...FOR NOW, WE'RE LATE TO REACH GENERAL CHAGONOV'S RENDEZVOUS.
...AND OUR TIMING IS CRITICAL. IF THE KONSTANTINOV ARRIVES AT ARCHANGEL BEFORE WE'VE REACHED THE GATES, IT WON'T LAST LONG.

THEY ARE NOT FAR NOW. MUCH CLOSER THAN THEY REALIZE.

KYUZO! I'VE GOT ANOTHER SQUAD INCOMING! HEAVY WEAPONS TEAM SETTING UP AT THE TRANSFER TOWERS!

NO SHOT. LONG RANGE AMMUNITION EXHAUSTED.

CAPTAIN MARTOV, THIS IS MAYA -- REDEPLOY YOUR AUTOCANNONS TO THE--

--CAPTAIN MARTOV?! COME IN!

GODDAMMIT! KYUZO CAN YOU SEE MARTOV'S SQUAD?

--THEY'RE GONE.

URIK! IT'S MAYA-- COME IN! WE ARE BEING OVERRUN-- REPEAT, WE ARE BEING OVERRUN!

M-YA! I D--N-- MO-- RE--CM--!!! TH- ARE NO-- TRROOPS-- AVAI-- !!!

COME BACK?! YOU'RE BREAKING UP!!! I NEED REINFORCEMENTS AND I NEED THEM NOW!

PROTOCOL: MTK-90!
AMMO: HIGH-EXPLOSIVE: ANTI-PERSONNEL!
RATE OF FIRE: TEN-THNN--
--MANG--!!!
--TN-THOUSAND ROUNDS PER MINUTE!
TRACERS: EVERY HUNDREDTH ROUND--!
WAS HOPING TO SAVE THIS LAST CARTRIDGE.
--KASTING!

MOST OF A BATTALION CHARGING OUR POSITION...
I COULD HAVE A TRUSS-CANNON UP HERE AND IT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH.
BUT I'LL BE DAMNED IF THEY'RE GOING TO FIND MY CORPSE WITHOUT EVERY LAST PROTOCOL SPENT.

--MAYA! YOU READING ME YET?! MAYA!!!

I COUNT NINE-- FOURTEEN -- IT'S A FULL SQUAD -- URI?! URIK!!!

---- --- ----!

TO HELL WITH IT--

--DOWN TO MY LAST CARTRIDGE UP HERE, URI!

ANYONE TO SPARE?!
I SENT YOU MARTOV'S MEN!
MARTOV'S *DEAD!* THEY'RE *ALL* DEAD!
ATTACK PROTOCOLS ALL GONE?
FIRING MY LAST MTK-90 RIGHT NOW! THE SUPPLY KASTERS ARE--
--CAPTURED. NO ONE CAN GET ANY AMMO. RUNNING OUT ALL OVER THE SHIP...
MAYA, I'M *SORRY.*
I'M *SORRY* I COULDN'T GET YOJ BACK TO HIM...

MAKITA-- LAST CLIP! MAKE 'EM COUNT!
SHHHH! YOU'RE GONNA BLOW MY POSITION!
SEE THAT CANNON THEY'VE MOUNTED TO TAKE YOU OUT?
--KEEP WATCHING IT...
...RED FLEET GRENADES. ALWAYS LIKED THEM.
KYUZO! THIS IS MAKITA--
--I'M ON MY WAY TO YOUR POSITION, OLD MAN!
--SO COVER ME!

KYLZO! WHAT'VE YOU GOT LEFT?!
HALER'S OUT OF AMMO-- DOWN TO THE BASICS--
--SHOTGUN AND LONGKNIFE.
YOU SHOULD GATE TO SAFER DECKS BEFORE I'M OVERRUN--
--FORGET IT! YOU HEARD URIK! THIS IS THE END! I'M NOT HIDING ON THE GODDAMNED BRIDGE! UNDERSTOOD?!
UNDERSTOOD.
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW, 'GORKA!
PROMISE ME SOMETHING, OLD MAN--
--WHEN WE GET TO HELL, HELP ME FIND MY FATHER SO I CAN KILL HIM AGAIN FOR GIVING ME THAT DAMNED LETTER!
* I SEE 'RUN MAKITA RUN' TO SEE WHAT MAKI'S TALKING ABOUT. THE LETTER THAT SET THE STAGE FOR THIS QUEST INTO THE STORM OF SOULS GOSS!

R.S.S. TAKTAROV
LATEST REPORTS HAVE COME IN...
...OUR FORCES WILL HAVE CONTROL OF THE KONSTANTINOV ANY MOMENT NOW, SKYMARSHALL.
AND IF I MAY, SIR-- CONGRATULATIONS. THIS VICTORY WAS A MASTERPIECE. I FEEL HONORED TO HAVE OBSERVED IT.
STILL... SHAME TO SEE THE KONSTANTINOV CUT TO PIECES LIKE THAT. NO OTHER SKYSHIP IN THE WORLD COULD HAVE TAKEN THAT PUNISHMENT FOR SO LONG...
...OLD MAN KORALEV BUILT HER TO FIGHT, THAT WAS FOR SURE.
TRANSMIT THE FOLLOWING TO ALL SQUAD COMMANDERS ON BOARD ENEMY VESSEL...
...UR.K AND MAYA ANTARES, ALONG WITH CHIEF ENGINEER TORIN--TO BE TAKEN ALIVE IF POSSIBLE.
ALL OTHER CREW; EXECUTED.
ENGINEERS WILL THEN DROP IT'S VENTRAL ARRAY AND ACTIVATE ITS SELF-DESTRUCT SEQUENCE.
OUR MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, WE WILL THEN MAKE OUR WAY HOME.
URIK. YOU HAVE NO IDEA
HOW MUCH DAMAGE YOU ALMOST BROUGHT DOWN UPON OUR NATION. AS IF IT WERE NOT ALREADY TEETERING ON THE ABYSS!
WHEN ANTARES IS CAPTURED, HE WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE ME. IMMEDIATELY.

KONSTANTINOV - TOWER ONE
BARELY STRENGTH TO SPEAK.
THAT'S IT... I'M OUT... IT'S OVER...
I'VE GOT LEFT A FEW BURST VOLTAGE PROTOCOLS, GOOD FOR TARGETING ENEMY ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS. NOT MUCH ELSE. I ALMOST LAUGH.
INCOMING FIRE STOPS FOR A MOMENT. MAYBE THEY THINK I'M HIT.
A SUDDEN QUIET.
MAYA! ARE YOU THERE?!
WHAT THE HELL.
A FEW ARCS OF ELECTRICITY MAY TAKE OUT A MAN OR TWO. I'LL OVERHAST AS WELL. GIVE IT ALL I'VE GOT.
GO DOWN IN A BLAZE.
KYUZO...
I'M SORRY...
...I'M SORRY I LED YOU ALL HERE FOR NOTHING.

PROTOCOL: BURST VOLTAGE. RANGE: MAXIMUM. POWER: OVERKAST TO CRITICAL.
ALL K.P.S. SAFETY WARDS:
DEACTIVATE. REPEAT. DEACTIVATE.
...KASTING.
*KASTER PHYSICAL SYSTEMS. A SET OF SAFETY PROTOCOLS THAT KEEPS A WARKASTER FROM DAMAGING HERSELF THROUGH USE OF SORCERY.
THE SKY SURGES WITH ME...
A SLOW STAB PUSHES THROUGH MY CHEST...
...IT'S JUST AS I'VE HEARD IT DESCRIBED.
...MY HEART STOPS. AND STARTS AGAIN, OFF RHYTHM. I TASTE METAL IN THE BACK OF MY THROAT AS I GO BLIND.
FOR ME, THERE IS ONLY SILENCE.
FOR THOSE ON DECK, THE SHOCKWAVE OF THE THUNDER IS DEAFENING.

FATAL.

MY CONSCIOUSNESS LEAVES MY BODY.

FATAL OVERKAST: I'VE GENERATED POWER BEYOND MY BODY'S CAPACITY TO ENDURE.

ALL THAT'S LEFT ARE A FEW FINAL, DREAMLIKE MOMENTS OF DISEMBODIED CONSCIOUSNESS; AND THEN...

...BUT THE DARKNESS DOES NOT DESCEND.

ONLY LIGHT. ONLY VOICES...

MA--A! -- C--ME IN!!! --RE YOU --?!!

I SHOULD BE *DEAD.*

--DONT-- KKA---- AST AGA--N! MA--A! LIS--N!!! YOU--L DIE--!!!

CAN'T READO YYOU, GARDSSMANN.

PRPARRING--TO KKOFFF-- KAST.

...YOU DECIMAT-D THEM! THEY-RE FALL--NG BACK-- !!

ALMOST T--K US OUT --ITH THEM! HOW THE HELL-- WHAT WAS-- -- ---!?

--LISTEN. TO ME. TAKE *NAKITA.* GET *BELOW.*

--NOW. THAT'S AN *ORDER!*

YOU CAN'T K--ST AGAIN!--

THEY SPOKE TO ME.

THEY DID NOT LET THE DARKNESS DESCEND.

THEY REFUSED TO LET ME DIE.

URIK TRIES TO STOP ME.

I BARELY HEAR HIM.

PROTOCOL: BURST VOLTAGE!...

THE PHYSICAL WORLD FADES TO MIST...

RANGE: MAXIMUM...

POWER: OVERKAST TO FATAL.

I LOOK FOR HIM IN THE SKY.

SEEK OUT HIS FORM, AS I ALWAYS HAVE...

URIK. KYUZO... I'M SORRY.

ALL K.P.S. WARDS, DEACTIVATE.

REPEAT. DEACTIVATION. ALL PHYSICAL SAFETY SYSTEMS.

CASTING...

BUT YOU HAVE TO REACH HIM.

YOU HAVE TO SAVE HIM.

WITH OR WITHOUT ...EX

I LOVE HIM TOO MUCH *NOT* TO HAVE DONE *EVERYTHING* I *COULD* HAVE DONE...

TO SEE THIS SHIP THROUGH THE STORM.

.....!!!

.. ...!!!

...TO DELIVER HIM FROM THIS HELL.

...IF THIS IS THE FIRST PASSAGE ON A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND HELLS...

...SO BE IT.

WHISPER TO HIM, FOR ME. OF THIS BATTLE.

TELL HIM...

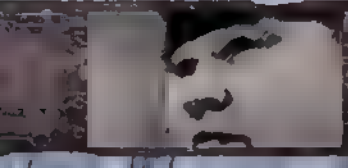
...THE KONSTANTINOV IS VICTORIOUS.

THE EYES OF IMBOHL

TEAM RED STAR

writer
creator
artist

writer



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PRISON OF SOULS

PART THREE: THE EYES OF IMBOHL

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★THE RED STAR
MAYA VICTORIOUS

IT IS IN SUCH MOMENTS THAT THE PAGES OF DESTINY ARE WRITTEN BY THE WILL OF THE LIVING...

...FOR IT WAS THE WILL OF THE CREW OF THE KONSTANTINOV, TO STAND TOGETHER WHEN ALL SEEMED LOST, THAT SAVED THEM.

THEY HAD FOUGHT AND DIED TOGETHER BY THE THOUSANDS ..

...THEY HAD BATHED IN THE BLOOD OF THEIR FALLEN FOES ..

THEY HAD WATCHED THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS TORN TO LIQUID BY THE WEAPONRY OF WAR...

...AND YET WOULD NOT BE UNDONE.

THEIR HEARTS BURNED WITH SUCH PURPOSE, THEIR MINDS JOINED BY SUCH PURITY OF TRUTH, THAT THE VERY SOULS OF OUR FOREBEARS, LONG IMPRISONED TO DO IMBOHL'S WILL, STIRRED FROM THEIR SERVITUDE.

IN THE PRESENCE OF SUCH COURAGE...

...THE STORM OF SOULS AWAKENED.

FOR A BRIEF, GLORIOUS MOMENT, THESE SPIRITS BROKE FREE FROM IMBOHL'S SUFFOCATING GRASP...

...CHOOSING NOT TO DWELL IN WEAKNESS, BUT TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE LIVING...

...GRANT THEM THEIR POWER...

...AND IN THE SORCERESS ANTARES HAD THEY FOUND THEIR VESSEL.

THE STORY SO FAR

The Konstantinov and Faktorov cruisers docked in orbit around Mars. Elsewhere in the Spiritrealm, Marcus and The Red Woman [illegible] to thwart the invasion of Archangel.

AS WE RETURN

In her desperation to save the Konstantinov, Maya has performed a suicidal maneuver, overtasking her last protocol to a fatal magnitude.

CHARACTERS

SRSS-MAJOR MAYA ANTARES

THE WIFE OF MARCUS ANTARES A POWERFUL SORCERESS. FOR TEN YEARS SHE BELIEVED HER HUSBAND DEAD, AND WILL LET NOTHING STOP HER FROM FINDING HIM.

SKYMARSHALL URIK ANTARES

LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM, URIK ANTARES COMMANDS A SAYFURNACE. IN HIS MEMORY, URIK HAS LED A MUTINY, STEALING HIS SHIP TO SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS BROTHER, MARCUS.

QUARTERMASTER KYUZO

EACH RED SORCERESS IS PROTECTED BY A GUARDSMAN OF THE THOUSANDS OF BODYGUARDS IN THE FLEET. NONE IS MORE DEADLY THAN KYUZO, DEFENDER OF MAYA ANTARES.

MAKITA

SHE WAS THE BEARER OF A MYSTERIOUS LETTER FROM MARCUS THAT WAS ALIVE AGAINST HER WILL. MAYA AND KYUZO TOOK HER ABOARD THE KONSTANTINOV AWAY FROM HER FORMER LIFE ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF NOBOSPHA.

CHIEF ENGINEER TORIN

THE CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE KONSTANTINOV AND URIK'S TRUSTED FIRST MATE. TORIN HOLDS A POWERFUL SECRET THAT HAS KEPT HIM A FUGITIVE FROM THE LAW

SKYMARSHALL VOLKOV

COMMANDER OF SAYFURNACE TARTAROV, VOLKOV HAS BEEN ORDERED TO UTTERLY DESTROY THE KONSTANTINOV AND ITS CREW AT ALL COSTS.

SRSS-COMMANDER NATALIA RAYVENNE

A PRODIGY AT THE FLEET ACADEMY, RAYVENNE IS THE TOP RANKING SORCERESS OF SAYFURNACE TARTAROV.

CHIEF ENGINEER SPECS

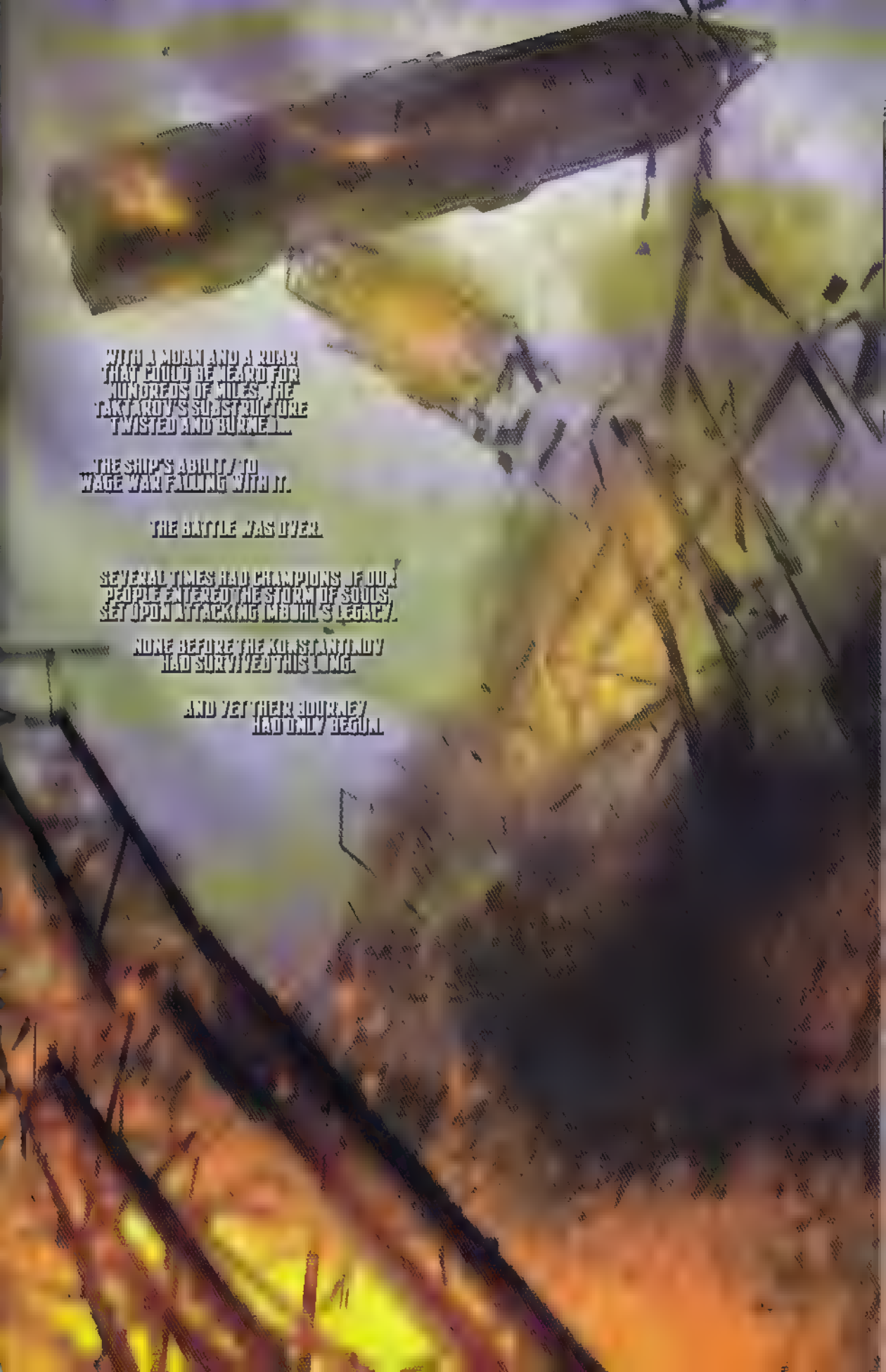
A BRILLIANT ENGINEER, HIS CUSTOM RETRO-FITS HAVE MADE THE TARTAROV ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE AND POWERFUL SHIPS IN THE FLEET.

THESE PAGES ARE WRITTEN TO REVEAL TO YOU THE NATURE OF EVIL.
WHAT IN INBOHL'S NAME IS THE NATURE OF THAT PROTOCOL?! REPORT!!!
AS A WARNING AGAINST FALLING INTO THE SERVICE OF DECEIVERS.
UNIDENTIFIED PROTOCOL - MAGNITUDE IS OFF THE SCALE - MAIN PROPULSION SYSTEMS FAILING!!!
--WE'RE LOSING LIFT! WE'RE TAKING ON GRAVITY!!!
RAYVENNE TO ALL KASTERS! ALL POWER TO EMERGENCY PROPULSION!
FOR ALL THE EPOCHS OF HUMAN HISTORY HAVE PROVED THIS TO BE: THAT THE WAGES OF BLIND OBEDIENCE IS DEATH.
IT'S TOO LATE! THE VENTRAL ARRAY IS SHATTERED!!
THIS IS CHIEF ENGINEER TO ALL VENTRAL ARRAY CREW! INVOKING COMMAND OVERRIDE! ORDER CODE NINE ZERO NINE!
REPEAT-- ALL V.A.C.-- WE ARE CUTTING THE VENTRAL ARRAY MOORINGS AND WE ARE CUTTING THEM NOW!
SPEED! YOU WILL RECALL THAT OVERRIDE IMMEDIATELY!
ORDER STANDS AS CALLED! IGNORE SKYMARSHALL VOLKOV AS PER OVERRIDE CODE!
"VENTRAL ARRAY: THE MASSIVE SUBSTRUCTURE OF A SHIP'S PRESENCE BELOW THE LOCATION OF THE MAIN PROPULSION SYSTEMS. ALSO KNOWN AS THE "KEEL" OF A SHIP. --OTHER HALL BY A SYSTEM OF INTERDEPENDENT MOORINGS.
IT IS IN THE LIVES OF THE DEFIANT THAT WE MUST FIND OUR STRENGTH. THOUGH THEIR PATH TO GLORY IS RARELY CLEAR...
ANYBODY HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING?!
SOME KIND OF ROGUE PROTOCOL HAS LASHED OUT FROM THE STORM!
THE TANTARCIV IS TAKING ON GRAVITY-- IF WE CAN'T CUT THEM LOOSE WE'RE GOING DOWN WITH THEM!
THEIRS IS A CALM THAT ONLY COURAGE BRINGS.
IT WAS MAYA!
--SHE GAVE HERSELF TO A SUICIDE KAST!!!
SHE'S GONE. UH!--
AND SHE'S TAKING THE TANTARCIV WITH HER!

THE SORCERESS ANTARES, HAVING BEHELD THE WORLD OF THE IMMORTALS, DARED TO DRAW ITS POWER INTO HER BODY.
SHE HAD ONCE BEEN A PAWN OF THE STATE, TRAINED TO TRANSFORM HER VERY BEING INTO SERVING ITS WILL.
NO LONGER.
FEARLESS BEFORE WHAT MUST BE DONE, BUNDED BY THE LIGHT OF DEATH, SHE BROUGHT DOWN UPON HER ENEMIES A TORRENT OF HER VENGEANCE.
THE ONLY QUESTION WAS WHO WOULD BE DESTROYED FIRST...
...THE SHIP OR THE SORCERESS.
I'M TELLING YOU THIS FOR THE LAST TIME, SPECS! RECALL THAT OVERRI--
--THE ARRAY IS FALLING, SKYMARSHAL!!!
WE'VE GOT LESS THAN A MINUTE BEFORE IT RIPS OUR GUTS OUT!!!

PRIMARY ARRAY DROP SEQUENCE BEGUN, CHIEF ENGINEER! BOW MOORINGS CLEARED! BUT I THINK WE'RE TOO LATE -- THE MAIN TANKS COULD RUPTURE AT ANY--
--IF THEY DO THEN IT'LL ALL BE OVER BEFORE WE KNOW IT-- JUST GET THOSE CORDS CUT!!!
--I'M ON MY WAY TO THE LAST MOORING STATION NOW!
MOORINGS CUT AMIDSHIPS!
MAIN TANK TEMPERATURE INCREASING!
SPECS, YOU GODDAMNED COWARD! I SHOULD HAVE LEFT YOU TO ROT IN THE CAMPS!!!
ALL MOORING SYSTEMS CLEARED, CHIEF! THE FINAL CUT IS YOURS!
SPECS! DO NOT -- I REPEAT, DO NOT BETRAY ME!!!
CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL, VOLKOV -- I'M MAKING THAT CUT!!!

SPECSSSS!!! YOU'RE A DEAD MAN! DEAD! YOU WON'T LIVE TO SEE THE END OF THIS DAY!
YOU CAN KILL ME, VOLKOV..
BUT I WON'T LET YOU KILL US ALL!
ARRAY RELEASED!!!


WITH A MOAN AND A ROAR THAT COULD BE HEARD FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES, THE TAKTAROV'S SUBSTRUCTURE TWISTED AND BURNED...
...THE SHIP'S ABILITY TO WAGE WAR FAILING WITH IT.
THE BATTLE WAS OVER.
SEVERAL TIMES HAD CHAMPIONS OF OUR PEOPLE ENTERED THE STORM OF SOULS, SET UPON ATTACKING MBUHL'S LEGACY.
NONE BEFORE THE XUL'STANTIADY HAD SURVIVED THIS LONG.
AND YET THEIR JOURNEY HAD ONLY BEGUN.

THE BASTARD'S BROKE IN AND LOST AS ITS GREAT GUNS SILENCED, SAT STILL IN THE SKY...
NOTHING COULD STOP YOU NOW, ANTARES.
I'VE DECIMATED YOUR CREW, SPENT MOST OF YOUR RESOURCES... AND YET SOMEHOW...
...SOMEHOW YOU HAVE US, IMMOBILE DEFENSELESS.
FINISH IT, THEN, YOU BASTARD. FINISH US SLOWLY. THESE COWARDS DESERVE NO BETTER.
PERSPECTIVE
SFX: SHOOM

ANTARES TO MEDIKAST -- GET SOMEONE TO TOWER ONE IMMEDIATELY.
--WE'VE TRIED, SIR. THE TOPDECKS ARE STILL COMPLETELY ELECTRIFIED. WHATEVER MAYA DID, SHE--
--IF SHE'S ALIVE, THEN SHE NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION. GET SOMEONE UP THERE NOW!
KYUZO? WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?
I'M IN THE RAILPITS, SIR, GETTING LOCKED IN.
DAMMIT, THAT'S RIGHT VOLKOV'S ZERO IS STILL ON BOARD--
--AND HE'S GOT SUPPORT. WE'RE STILL CRAWLING WITH ENEMY TR--
THE COMBAT RADGRD WAS TO BE A TANGLED MESS! ISN'T THERE SOME OTHER WAY TO--
--HE'S TRAINED TO STRIKE FROM THE GRID IT'S THE ONLY--
--ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. I'M ON MY WAY DON'T LAUNCH UNTIL I GET THERE!
ANNA! GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT -- HOW BAD IS IT?
HOW MUCH TIME HAVE YOU GOT?
THAT BAD?
WORSE
I WON'T REALLY KNOW UNTIL WE GET THESE FIRES OUT--
WELL, IN THE MEANTIME, THE BRIDGE IS YOURS. I'LL BE IN THE RAILPITS--
--I WANT YOU TO ASSEMBLE A LANDING TEAM AND STRIP THE TAKTAROV WE NEED SUPPLIES -- BEANS, BULLETS, BANDAGES WHATEVER ISN'T NAILED DOWN. IF THEY RESIST, TELL THEM WE'LL UNLEASH THE STORM ON THEM AGAIN
BUT -- HOW WOULD WE -- CAN WE DO THAT?
WELL NO BUT VOLKOV'S IN NO POSITION TO CALL MY BLUFF. MAKE IT FAST
YES, SIR. AND URI--
--IS IT TRUE? WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT MAYA?
I DON'T KNOW, ANNA. I DON'T KNOW

SKYMARSHALL, MOST OF THE ENEMY TROOPS ARE SURRENDERING, HAVING SEEN WHAT THE STORM DID TO THEIR SHIP... GOOD, WHICHEVER ONES YOU CAN GET TO SWITCH SIDES AND FIGHT FOR US THE BETTER... THOSE THAT REFUSE, REDISTRIBUTE THEIR WEAPONS AND ARMOR AND LOCK THEM UP... SKYMARSHALL, THE FIREFIGHTERS ARE RUNNING LOW ON WATER, AND THE PRESSURE IS IN & OUT...DRAIN THE RESERVE COOLANTS AROUND THE MAIN ENGINES... SKYMARSHALL, SIR, WE'VE GOT FAR MORE WOUNDED THAN I HAVE PROTOCOLS TO HEAL! ...WHICHEVER ONES STILL HAVE FACES, GET THEM DRUNK. IF THERE ARE THOSE WHO WANT TO DIE, THEN GIVE THEM FINAL MERCY... YES, SKYMARSHALL... I'M SORRY, SKYMARSHALL, BUT THE NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEMS ARE STILL MALFUNCTIONING. IT'S NO DIFFERENT THAN WHEN WE ENTERED THE STORM, SIR... SHIP TO SHIP COMMUNICATIONS MALFUNCTION, STILL BLIND, SIR... I CAN'T GET THROUGH TO THE MAIN GRIDS TO SEE IF... ARMOR IS SHOT TO PIECES ON THE STARBOARD SIDE... TORIN, HOW MUCH OF THIS CAN WE REPAIR...?

...WHEN WE SEE WHAT WE CAN RIP OFF OF THE TAKTAROV I'LL HAVE A BETTER IDEA, URIK... CASUALTIES ARE STILL BEING COUNTED, SKYMARSHALL, WE'VE STILL GOT MEN TRAPPED NEAR THE 33RD REACTOR... MEN TRAPPED IN THE 12TH, 14TH...22ND...33RD...143RD, AND 3RD INFANTRY BATTALIONS ARE WIPED OUT TO A MAN...WE NEED A DECISION REGARDING WHAT TO DO WITH THE BODIES, SIR... IF THEY'RE OURS, BAG THEM, TAG THEM IF YOU CAN. IF THEY'RE FROM THE TAKTAROV, THROW THEM OVER THE SIDE. IT'S SOMETIMES TOUGH TO TELL 'EM APART, SIR... I REALIZE THAT CAPTAIN, DO YOUR BEST... YES, SIR..... NOTHING BUT STORMCLOUDS AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE, SIR. NO FEATURES, NO VESSELS, NO SIGNALS, NOTHING. I REGRET TO INFORM YOU, SKYMARSHALL, THAT WE ARE LOST, COMPLETELY LOST... REMEMBER, URIK MY SON, YEARS FROM NOW, WHEN YOU ARE IN COMMAND OF A SKYFURNACE, THAT TO BE A LEADER IS TO BE A DECISION MAKER, AND TO BE A DECISION MAKER IS TO MAKE FIFTY DECISIONS YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE FOR EVERY ONE THAT YOU DO.

THE GORKA? WHERE'D YOU LEARN TO LOCK IN A RAILFIGHTER?
BEGINNING OF THE WAR BATTLE FOR THE QUEENS AT KALI GORGE
--HAS ANYONE TOLD YOU YOUR EYE LOOKS TERRIBLE?

PERMISSION TO SPEAK FREELY
THE ZERO'S DEMOLITIONS COULD TAKE THE SHIP DOWN. I WANT TO CUT HIM OFF FROM HIS PRIORITY TARGETS.
CLOSE US IN, SIR THE ZERO AND I. I'LL PURSUE HIM INTO THE LOWER TUNNELS. WHEN I DO, I REQUEST YOU CLOSE THE ACCESS VAULTS BEHIND US
YOU WANT TO GO OUT OF CONTACT? WHAT IF YOU NEED BACKUP?
IT WOULD BE A WASTE TO SEND ANYONE THEY WOULDN'T LAST LONG AGAINST A ZERO.

HEY, OLD MAN...
...YOU'LL NEED A BETTER HELMET THAN THIS OLD THING, WON'T YOU?

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, LITTLE GIRL...
YOU KEEP YOUR TORN-UP BOOTS THAT ARE THREE SIZES TOO BIG FOR YOU...
...AND LET AN OLD MAN KEEP A FEW GOOD LUCK CHARMS OF HIS OWN, HMM?

BRIDGE? THIS IS ANTARES. WE'VE GOT A RAILFIGHTER ON THE GRID
REPEAT: WE'VE GOT A RAILFIGHTER ON THE GRID
TRACK HIM TO ZETA DECK. THEN CLOSE THE VAULTS BEHIND HIM...
...THAT'S AN ORDER

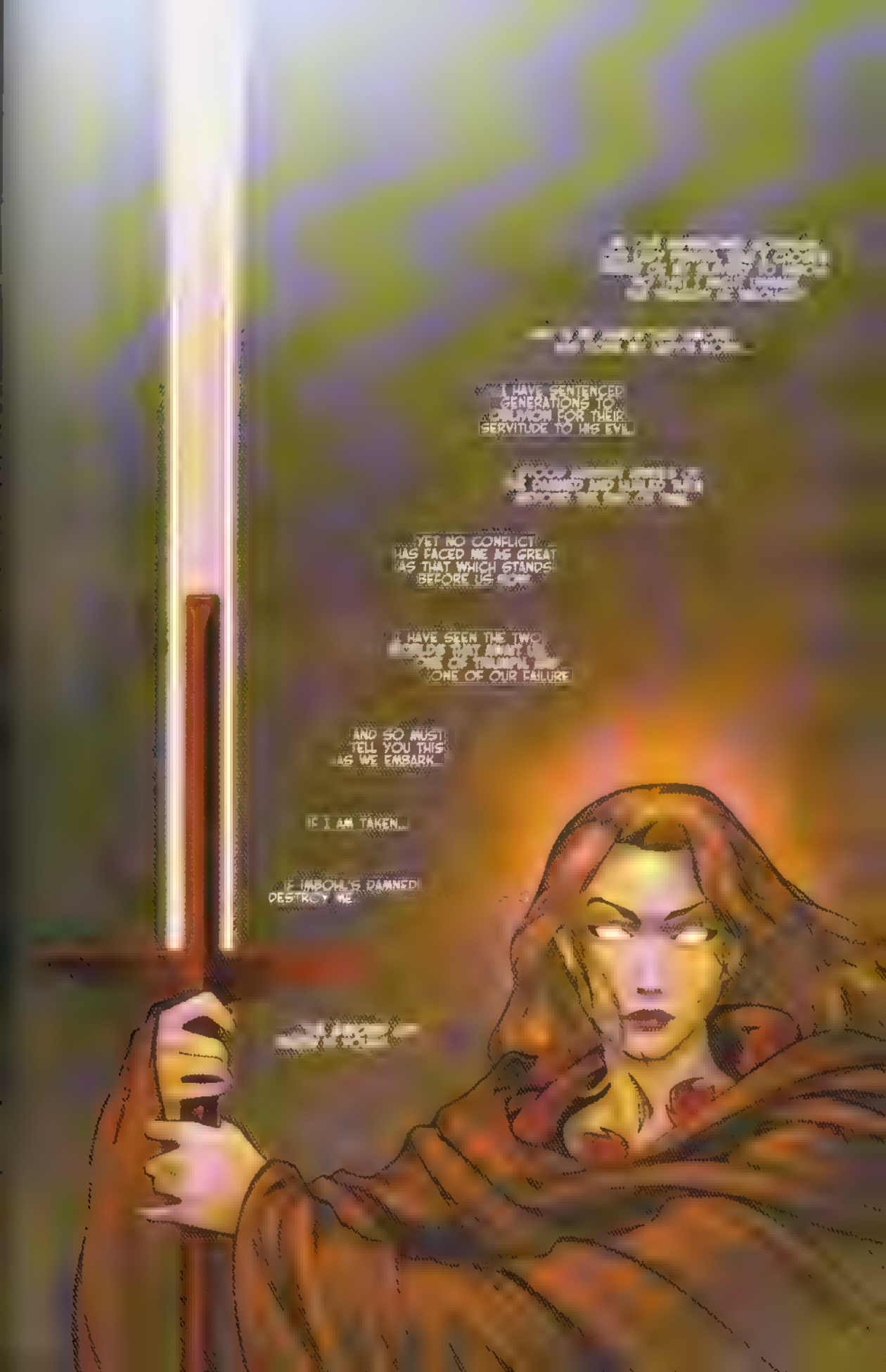
KALI GORGE, HUH? I FORGET YOU'VE BEEN A SOLDIER FOR LONGER THAN MOST OF MY RECRUITS
KYLZO WAS RIGHT YOU'RE ONE HELLUVA FIGHTER.
WHA? WHUD'D YOU SAY? I-
YOU MUST BE STARVING
...HEADQUARTERS DECK?
YES, SKYMARSHALL.
I'M SENDING SOMEONE UP SHE'S TO BE FED. FED WELL. AS IF IT WAS FOR ME, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
IMMEDIATELY, SIR
GO AHEAD, KID ENJOY I'VE GOT WORK TO--
--URIK...
...THIS IS ANTARES -- I CAN BARELY HEAR YOU -- COME IN?
URIK... ARE YOU THERE?
MAYA?!
--AM I HERE? AM I HERE?! WHERE THE HELL--
..THANK YOU.
--WHAT THE HELL-- !?
WHERE ARE YOU?! ARE YOU ALRIGHT?! WHAT HAPPENED?! WE THOUGHT--
--TOWER ONE! OR WHAT'S LEFT OF IT!
MORE IMPORTANTLY, URIK -- I KNOW!
I CAN FINALLY SEE!

...LISTEN, MAYA, JUST STAY CALM! YOU'RE IN SHOCK--
--HOW THE HELL COULD YOU NOT BE?
NO, URIK, NO!
LISTEN TO ME!
I KNOW NOW, WHY THEY CALL THIS THE STORM OF SOULS--!
...AND THE SOULS HAVE SHOWN ME, I'VE SEEN THE WAY THERE--
--I'VE SEEN THE WAY TO ARCHANGEL!!!

THE SORCERESS ANTARES, AND HER BELOVED MARCUS, WERE NOW MORE UNITED THAN THEY HAD EVER BEEN. FOR NOT ONLY WERE THEY MAN AND WIFE, INSEPERABLE, BUT BOTH NOW SHARED THE GIFT OF COMMON VISION...
...BOTH MARCUS AND MAYA POSSESSED THE EYES OF IMBURU.
WORD OF THIS MIRACLE SPREAD QUICKLY THROUGHOUT THE SPIRIT REALM, AS ROGUE SOULS FROM ALL THE EPOCHS OF THE LANDS OF THE RED STAR GATHERED TO BEGIN THE CONFLICT THAT WOULD DECIDE THE FATE OF OUR PEOPLE.
MARCUS?
FORGIVE ME, GENERAL SAMSONOV -- MY MIND WANDERS AT THE SIGHT OF THE ARRIVAL OF OUR ALLIES.

UNDERSTANDABLE. THE SPIRITS WHISPER OF THE VICTORY OF THE KONSTANTINOV
YOUR BROTHER IS AN ABLE LEADER, MARCUS ANTARES HIS CREW, AND HIS SHIP, HAVE GIVEN HIM A TRIUMPH THAT I MYSELF DID NOT BELIEVE POSSIBLE
NONETHELESS...
...THE TIME IS AT HAND. THE KONSTANTINOV WILL ATTACK ARCHANGEL FROM THE SOUTH, AND WE WILL BREACH THE FORTRESS HERE AT ITS UTTERMOST NORTHERN WALL.
UPON YOUR COMMAND, SORCERESS, THE INVASION BEGINS

THEIR
THE BIRTH OF OUR NATION.
NEW RING
T NEW LIFE.
HE WAS DONE WITH ALL OF THIS, YOU KNOW. SO ARE THEM WERE. THEY HAVE
FOR GENERATIONS, IN THE MOST DISTANT CITADELS OF OUR HEROES' HOLY PLACES
YOUR COURAGE AWAKENED
WITHIN YOU, AS MAYA'S COURAGE AWAKENED IT WITHIN HER.
THE
IS UNIQUE, BUT THE IT THAT DARES
SPIRIT IS CALLED TO SERVICE THIS DAY
AND WHEN THE COLD EMBER OF
IT WILL REMAIN
TO EACH OF ITS CHAMPIONS IT SINGS A PROPHECY.


I HAVE SENTENCED GENERATIONS TO OBLIVION FOR THEIR SERVITUDE TO HIS EVIL.
YET NO CONFLICT HAS FACED ME AS GREAT AS THAT WHICH STANDS BEFORE US NOW.
I HAVE SEEN THE TWO
ONE OF OUR FAILURE
AND SO MUST TELL YOU THIS AS WE EMBARK.
IF I AM TAKEN...
IF IMBOHL IS DAMNED! DESTROY ME.

A GREAT CRY WAS HEARD THEN, IN THE HIDDEN WASTES WHERE THE ARMIES OF THE LAWBRINGER ASSEMBLED.
NEVER BEFORE HAD THEIR BEEN SUCH A FORCE.
FOR NEVER BEFORE HAD OUR PEOPLE BEEN IN SUCH PERIL...
FROM ACROSS THE HISTORY OF THE LANDS OF THE RED STAR THEY HAD COME TO STAND UNITED.

...THEY WOULD FIGHT TO SAVE THEIR NATION...
...OR BE DAMNED WITH IT FOREVER.
THE FIFTH CHRONICLE,
THE INVASION OF
ARCHANGEL, BOOK I

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RED STAR
BLOOD BROTHERS

THE GATES OF ARCHANGEL

FIELD REPORT: SKYMARSHALL DRIK ANTARES, COMMANDING OFFICER, R.S.S. KONSTANTINOV.
AS A FUGITIVE FROM THE GOVERNMENT THAT I ONCE SERVED, THE MUTINEER CAPTAIN OF A STOLEN VESSEL, THERE IS NO REGULATION THAT OBLIGES ME TO REPORT.
I RECORD THIS FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN MY OWN SENSE OF DUTY TO THOSE WHO HAVE SO COMPLETELY GIVEN OF THEMSELVES IN SERVICE TO THIS SHIP.
THE R.S.S. RED STAR SKYSHIP MARSHALL KONSTANTINOV. SKYFURNACE CLASS. DESIGNATION NUMBER THIRTY-SIX.
IT MAY BE MY FINAL REPORT.
FOR ELEVEN HOURS KYUZO AND ZERO HAVE BEEN DUELING ON THE RAIL GRIDS IN THE HEART OF THE SHIP. THERE IS NO WAY TO TRACK THEM, NO SIGN OF THEIR CONFLICT OTHER THAN THE SUDDEN BURST OF A DISTANT EXPLOSION SOMEWHERE BELOW DECKS.
IF KYUZO CANNOT STOP HIM, THE ZERO WILL SET HIS MAIN CHARGES, AND THE END WILL COME.
QUICKLY.

THE ZERO OPERATIVE IS DESIGNED FOR A SINGLE BATTLEFIELD ROLE: TO INFILTRATE AND ASSASSINATE THE COMMANDERS OF AN ENEMY VESSEL. AS A LAST RESORT, HE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS THROUGH DEMOLITION OF THE SHIP ITSELF.
"THE ONLY CHANCE WE HAVE AGAINST HIM IS KYUZO."
WE BLASTED OUR WAY THROUGH THE SOUTHERN FLEET IN OUR ESCAPE FROM NOMGORHA.
BLINDED BY THE STORM OF SOULS, WE WITHSTOOD THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE TAKTAROV.
NOW ITS ALL IN KYUZO'S HANDS...

HEY.
HOW'S MY FAVORITE LIGHTNING ROD?
HOW'S MY FAVORITE BAD COMEDIAN?
HAPPY TO SEE YOU ALIVE. THAT'S FOR DAMNED SURE.
HOW LONG WAS I OUT?
ABOUT NINE, MAYBE TEN HOURS.
WAS THAT AN EXPLOSION JUST A MOMENT AGO?
YEAH. RAIL GRENADES.
MY GOD, THEY'VE BEEN FIGHTING ALL THIS TIME?
FROM HEAD TO STERN, THEY'RE LOCKED IN THE VAULTS BELOW Z-DECK, SO NONE OF US KNOW ANY DETAILS...
...IT'S DRIVING TORIN CRAZY.

WE'RE ALMOST THERE, YOU KNOW. IT'S VERY CLOSE NOW.
THE FORTRESS OF THE ARCHANGEL.
IT WAS SO STRANGE, URI. WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE. TO ME.
EVERYTHING THE RED WOMAN TOLD US--THE MYSTERIES THAT SHE TRIED TO EXPLAIN THAT DAY IN NOKGORKA, THEY'VE ALL BECOME AS CLEAR AS DAWN...*
* VOLUME I, ISSUE 4 - GOSS
...THIS STORM, THIS STRANGE, FROZEN SEA OF MIST; IS FULL OF SOULS. THEIR SORROW IS THE DARKNESS. THE COLD IS THEIR FEAR. WHEN THEY GAVE ME THEIR POWER TO BATTLE THE TAKTAROV, THE THUNDER OF THEIR ANGER LIT THE SKY.
THEY ARE OUR PEOPLE, URIK. THE GHOSTS OF OUR PEOPLE. THEY SERVED IMBOWL IN LIFE, AND IMBOWL HAS ENSLAVED THEM IN DEATH.
THE STORM IS NOT ONLY A PRISON ITSELF, IT IS THE GREAT OUTER BARRIER IN WHICH THE REST OF THE PRISONS ARE HIDDEN. ARCHANGEL IS ONE OF THEM...
...BUT THERE ARE HUNDREDS MORE BEYOND IT.
AND MARCUS? WHAT ABOUT MAR--
YES. HE'S OUT THERE. WITH THE RED WOMAN. WHEN THEY SEE THE KONSTANTINOV IN THE SKY ABOVE THEM, THE ATTACK ON ARCHANGEL BEGINS.
HMM. AFTER ALL OF THIS, WE'VE ONLY JUST NOW REACHED THE BEGINNING...
...CAN YOU PLEASE NOT PUT IT THAT WAY?
HAVE YOU SEEN MAKITA? I HAD A DREAM ABOUT HER. WHERE IS SHE?
I JUST SAW HER, ACTUALLY...

I WAS SITTING ALONE ON THE TOP DECK...
I HAD COME UP THERE TO STEAL MYSELF SOME OF SOMEONE'S...
THE DECK WAS STILL WEARING THE STENCIL OF THE BATTLE.
MANILA DIDN'T COME.
SHE JUST SAT, QUIETLY, AT PEACE, ABOVE IT ALL.
SHE WAS QUIET, STARING AT THESE TWO BOOKS, THEY'D BEEN TOSSED INTO A JUNKHEAP DURING THE BATTLE...
SEE, THAT'S WHY I LIKE YOU, MANILA. YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON I'VE EVER MET WHO'S ACTUALLY READ THE MANUAL!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT AT FIRST...
...BUT SHE WAS TRYING TO MAKE ONE TELEKINETICALLY, AS IF SHE WAS SOME GAMER FROM THE ACADEMY.
SHE'D OBVIOUSLY SEEN IT DONE...
LET'S SEE IF SHE'S ANY TROOPERS ARE FAZED.
MY MENTAL COMMANDS CAN MOVE PHYSICAL OBJECTS...
DAMN!
...AT A DISTANCE.
SO, "DOLLY" HAS SEEN THE BOOK ON HOW TO USE HER WEAPON.
FIRST LESSON, TROOPS, SUMMONING YOUR WEAPON

...ONCE UNDER TRAINED MENTAL COMMAND, THE HOOK IS THE MOST VERSATILE WEAPON SYSTEM EVER DEVISED.
UNTIL YOU HAVE UNLOCKED YOUR MIND'S CAPACITY FOR TELEKINESIS, HOWEVER, IT IS USELESS.
IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOME, EVEN THOSE WITH THE CAPACITY FOR TELEKINETIC COMMAND MUST FIRST BREAK THROUGH THE BRAIN'S RESISTANCE.
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO DO THAT. IF YOU CAN. BUT FIRST I'VE GOT A QUESTION...
...YOU'RE NOT DEADLY ENOUGH ALREADY, YOU WANT TO LEARN TO WIELD A HOOK?
ALWAYS HAVE.
MY FATHER WAS RED INFANTRY. BEFORE THE BREAKUP OF THE REPUBLICS.
IS THAT WHERE YOU GOT THE HAT?
AND HIS COAT. AND THE BOOTS.
HE WANTED ME TO SURVIVE YOUR INVASION. SO HE TAUGHT ME WAR.
IF HE HAD LIVED, HE WOULD HAVE TAUGHT M--
IF HE HAD LIVED, HE WOULD HAVE TAUGHT YOU WHAT I AM GOING TO TELL YOU NOW...
...IT'S A TRADITION PASSED DOWN FROM OFFICERS TO CADETS.
HOW TO SUMMON A HOOK FOR THE FIRST TIME.
IT'S A BIT OF A SECRET. THE GOVERNMENT DISCOURAGES ITS USE, AND YOU'LL NEVER FIND IT IN THE FIELD MANUAL. BUT I'VE NEVER MET A TRAINING SERGEANT THAT DIDN'T SWEAR BY IT.

THE SECRET IS THIS:
CONCENTRATE ON SOMETHING YOU'VE LOST.
SOMETHING YOU KNOW YOU CAN NEVER, EVER GET BACK.
AND THEN BELIEVE— THAT YOU CAN, SOMEHOW...
...HOLD IT ONCE AGAIN.
YOU'RE NO STRANGER TO LOSS.
VICTORY IS ALWAYS MORE DESIRABLE... BUT DEFEAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE BETTER TEACHER.
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I KEEP TELLING MYSELF...
...GET SOME REST, MAKITA.
SHE KNEW THOSE SOLDIER'S EYES OF HERS.
...AFTER ALL WE'D BEEN THROUGH, EVERY THROAT SHE'D HAD TO CUT, EVERY SHOT SHE'D HAD TO MAKE...
...JUST THE BEGINNING.
SHE KNEW OUR GREATEST BATTLE WAS STILL AHEAD OF US.
SHE WAS GOING TO MAKE DAMNED SURE SHE WAS READY.

FIELD REPORT TO THE INTERIOR MINISTRY...
...FROM SKYMARSHALL TARAS VOLKOV, COMMANDING OFFICER, RSIS. TAKTAROV.
FINAL REPORT.
APPROX. THREE HOURS BEFORE EXPIRATION OF EMERGENCY PROPULSION.
THREE HOURS UNTIL FULL GRAVITY, SUBSEQUENT DESCENT AND FATAL IMPACT.
NOTE OF INTEREST. THE COMMISSAR HAS MADE CONTACT.
REPEAT. THE COMMISSAR HAS CONTACTED ME AND IS EN ROUTE.
AS FAR AS I AM AWARE, THIS IS FIRST CONTACT SINCE HIS DISAPPEARANCE.
AS I WILL STAY ON BOARD THE TAKTAROV UNTIL THE END, ANY FURTHER REPORT OF THIS RENDEZVOUS I LEAVE AS HIS RESPONSIBILITY.
END REPORT.

NOT SINCE ALISTAIR HAS ANYONE SEEN HIM.
AFTER ALL OF THE LEGENDS THAT HAVE SURROUNDED HIS NAME...
...HE MAKES HIS GRAND ENTRANCE TOO LATE TO DO ME ANY GOOD.
COMRADE COMMISSAR, YOUR TIMING IS IMPECCABLE...
...YOU'VE MISSED THE BATTLE COMPLETELY. BY ABOUT TEN YEARS.
TARAS VOLKOV...
...DO NOT BE FOOLISH.
MY ABSENCE, FORCED UPON ME, HAS YET LED ME TO A GREATER POWER...

I HAVE RETURNED TO DELIVER US FROM PRAVDA, AND TO DESTROY HER CHAMPION: THE RED WITCH WHO SENT ME INTO EXILE.
IT WAS HER SORCERY THAT DEFEATED ME AT KAR DATHRA'S GATE. IT WAS HERS AGAIN THAT LED THE KONSTANTINOV HERE, TO YOUR SHAME.
AND I NOW BEAR THE WEAPON THAT WILL AT LAST BRING AN END TO HER CRUSADE.
I, TROIKA, HAVE BEEN CHOSEN.
THE SWORD OF LEG IS MINE.
COME TARAS.
LET US SPEAK OF HOW WE MIGHT GRANT YOU YOUR VENGEANCE.

...I WOULD HAVE TO REPORT THAT THE STORM OF SOULS IS NO LONGER AN EFFECTIVE DEFENSE AGAINST ENTRY INTO THE SPIRITREALM...
...THE KONSTANTINOV SHOULD HAVE SUFFERED COMPLETE SYSTEMS FAILURE. SHE SHOULD HAVE FALLEN LIKE A STONE ONCE WE PENETRATED THE BARRIER.
AS THE COMMANDER IN PURSUIT OF THE TRAITORS, MY SHIP SHOULD HAVE BEEN IMMUNE. YET THE STORM ATTACKED US AS WELL.
IMBOHL'S POWER HAS WEAKENED. EVEN HERE, THE GHOSTS DO NOT FEAR HIM AS THEY ONCE DID.
...THE SOULPRISONS ARE IN DECAY. THOSE THAT CAN STILL BIND GHOSTS WITHIN THEIR WALLS CAN BARELY BLEED ENOUGH POWER FROM THEM TO BE OF ANY BENEFIT TO THE STATE.
ARCHANGEL'S DEFENSES ARE STILL POWERFUL ENOUGH TO STOP THEM. I WILL LEAD THE FORCES THERE.

BUT FIRST, THERE IS THE MATTER OF YOUR FAILURE.
FOR GENERATIONS I HAVE SERVED AS THE INSTRUMENT OF IMBOHL'S WRATH AGAINST THOSE WHO COULD NOT PERFORM THEIR DUTIES.
FOR YOU, COMRADE, THAT TIME HAS COME...

COMMISSAR, COMMISSAR, COMMISSAR...
IS THIS ALL YOU HAVE LEFT?
THE GREAT TROIKA...?
HOW HAS IMBOHL'S WRATH INCARNATE BECOME SO PATHETIC A FIGURE?
I SHOULD BE KNEELING LIKE A PEASANT FARMER.
I SHOULD BE BEGGING LIKE A DOG.
HOW MANY MILLIONS OF US HAVE SPENT THEIR LAST MOMENTS IN FEAR BEFORE YOU?
AND ALL YOU CAN INSPIRE IN ME IS SADNESS.
I CAN NOW SEE THE PASSING OF MY NATION'S GREATEST AGE.
THERE IS BUT ONE HOPE LEFT FOR THE RETURN OF IMBOHL'S GLORY...

...IF YOU ARE TO HAVE ANY CHANCE AGAINST THEM...
...IT WILL BE THAT THE ANGER OF MY SOUL GUIDES THIS BLADE.
--HHHKKGGNNN!!
NNRRRGGGHHH!!
--I WILL.
RREMAINN--
--IN THISSS BATTLE--
--IF ONLY -- AS HATREDD ITSELFFF!
MY SOUL-- IS YOURS--
CCOMMISSSARRRR..
..AND FROM THIS SWORD--
--I WILL HAVE MY VENGEANCE.

BELOVED COMRADE...
...YOURS IS A SOUL TOO GREAT FOR THE COMMON LIFE OF FILTHY FLESH.
A SPIRIT OF IRON I SEE BEFORE ME.
IT IS MY HONOR TO DELIVER YOU UNTO YOUR DESTINY...
...TO DRINK THE BLOOD OF ALL WHO STAND AGAINST US.
BE REBORN, MY BROTHER.
BE REBORN.
COME, YOUR CREW AWAITS US... LET THOSE WHO FAILED YOU BE THE FIRST TO FEEL YOUR WRATH...

WE ARE THE AGENTS OF REDEMPTION, CUT FROM THE ORE OF OUR ANCIENT LAND
LET THEM COME, THESE CHILDREN WHO OPPOSE US
UPON THE WALLS OF ARCHANGEL WILL THEY MEET THEIR FATE

CITADEL, CAPITOL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF RED STATES (FORMER U.R.R.S.)
KIROV SKYDOCKS
WELL, YOU WERE RIGHT, ALEXEI. HOLDING AL'ISTAAN HAS BEEN HELL.* AND IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE WE'LL BE STOPPING THERE.
* BRUSILOV AND ROGERS LAST MET IN VOLUME 1 - ISSUE #9 - 2005
THE WORST THING ABOUT AGE, STEVEN...
...IS THAT YOU'RE ALWAYS RIGHT WHEN YOU'D MUCH RATHER BE PROVEN WRONG.
ANYWAY, CONGRATULATIONS ON THE NEW COMMAND, FLEET MARSHALL.
THE NEVSKY IS STATE OF THE ART. UNLIKE ANY SKYFURNACE I'VE EVER SEEN. YOUR ENGINEERS HAVE SURPASSED THEMSELVES.
YOU TRANSNATS ARE GOOD. I HAVEN'T EVEN TOLD MY WIFE YET!
NOT THAT SHE REALLY WANTS TO KNOW. I PROMISED HER I WAS GOING TO RETIRE.
OF COURSE, THAT WAS BEFORE THE KONSTANTINOV MUTINY...
...LAST REPORTS ARE THAT THE TAKTAROV IS OUT OF THE ACTION.
YES. TROUBLING NEWS. WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, EVEN WITH YOU IN COMMAND--
--WE HAVE DOUBTS THAT THE NEVSKY CAN INTERCEPT THEM BEFORE THEY REACH ARCHANGEL.
I CAME HERE AS A FRIEND. IF YOU CAN'T STOP ANTARES, YOU KNOW WHAT I'LL BE ORDERED TO DO.
I AM TOUCHED BY YOUR NATION'S CONCERN FOR OUR RESOURCES--
--STOP IT, ALEXEI. AN ATTACK ON THE P.H.E. RESERVES* -- ANYWHERE -- IS AN ATTACK ON THE WORLD'S ECONOMY.
MY SUPERIORS WILL DEFEND THEIR INTERESTS.
* (P.H.E.: POST HUMAN ENERGY) THE SECRET WEALTH OF THE WORLD'S GOVERNMENTS DERIVED FROM THE CONTAINMENT OF HUMAN SOULS AFTER DEATH.

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THERE IS A STORY ABOUT TARAS VOLKOV...
DURING HIS TIME IN PRISON, HE LED A REVOLT. ONE OF THE MORE IMPRESSIVE UPRISINGS.
THE MEN FOLLOWED HIM FOR ONE REASON.
...WITH HIS BARE HANDS, HE RIPPED A GUARD'S FACE OFF.
TORE THE MAN'S FLESH FROM HIS SKULL.
IF SUCH A MAN AS THIS COULD NOT STOP THE KONSTANTINOV...
...NONE OF YOU HAVE A CHANCE.
I HAVE MY ORDERS.
I'LL DO MY DUTY.

ALEXEI KONSTANTINOV
NO WORD FROM KYUZO?
NO. NONE. OTHER THAN THE FACT WE'RE STILL ALIVE.
MAYA-- CAN YOU SEE THEM? RIGHT NOW?
THOUSANDS OF THEM.
TORIN, CAN YOU?
NOTHING BUT SKY.
THAT'S OUR HEADING. WE STAY ON THIS COURSE. WE FLY TO BATTLE TOGETHER.
MAYA AND MY BROTHER SPEAK WITH THE DEAD. MY CHIEF ENGINEER IS A LIVING BLAST FURNACE...*
* VOLUME I - ISSUE #5 - 6055
...WHERE THE HELL WAS I WHEN ALL THE POWERS WERE BEING HANDED OUT?
WELL, WE'RE ALL FOLLOWING YOU TO CERTAIN DEATH.
...THAT'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING.
IT WAS NOT ONLY THE GHOSTS OF THE ANCIENTS WHO ROARED IN SALUTE THAT DAY...

A TRIBUTE THAT ONLY THE SORCERESS ANTARES COULD HEAR...
BUT THOSE TOO OF HER OWN FALLEN COMRADES.
THOSE WHO HAD GIVEN THEIR LIVES SO THAT THEIR SHIP WOULD NOT BE LOST.
AND IN THE PRESENCE OF THESE HEROES...
...THE KONSTANTINOV SAILED ONWARD.
WITH ALL THE WORLD AGAINST IT...
TO BREACH THE GATES OF HELL.
FIFTH CHRONICLE, THE INVASION OF ARCHANGEL, BOOK III